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China TOURISM

Appreciating Flowers Around China

Mt Yandang in Southern Zhejiang

The 10th Anniversary of HKSAR

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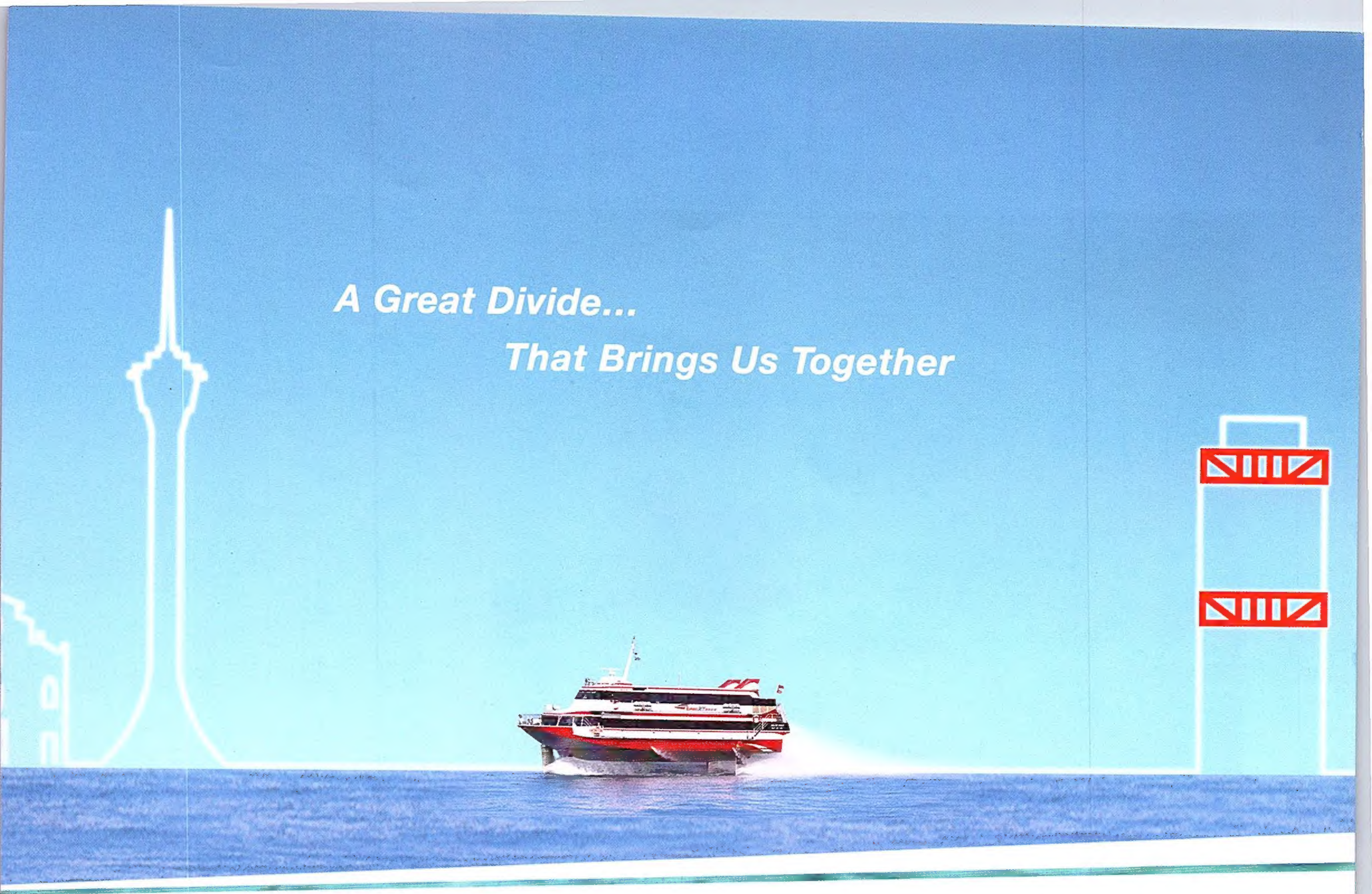

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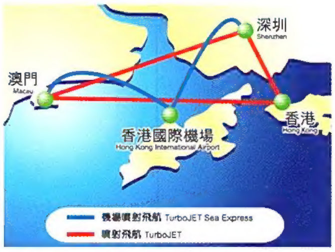
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Ultimate Sea Journey

Jul/Aug 2007

310 Contents

18

5 Market-Go-Round

6 From the Editor

Happy Anniversaries

8 Update

10 Travel Notes

12 Photography

Dance of the Flying Wings

Photos & Article • Zhong Yonghong

18 Feature Story I

Sea of Flowers

Photos & Article • Shi Baoxiu, Xie Guanghui, Huang Yanhong, Chan Yat Nin et al

When summertime is coming, different flowers found in China are ready to welcome their fans with their best look. Luckily, many flowers which survive best in cool places will not disappoint their lovers in winter time. Flowers are not only for decoration or the subject of photographs. In China, they can always be served in unforgettably dishes that are both delicious and beneficial to human body.

108 Feature Story II

Landscapes: Mt Yandang to the Nanxi River

Photos & Article • Huang Yanhong, Zhou Mingfa et al

Compared to better-known tourist destinations of East China's Zhejiang Province such as Zhouzhuang, Mt Yandang and Nanxi River are less familiar to foreign travellers. In fact, the perennial beauty of Mt Yandang and its surrounding areas have attracted numerous local travellers and photographers to sketch its landscape for many years.

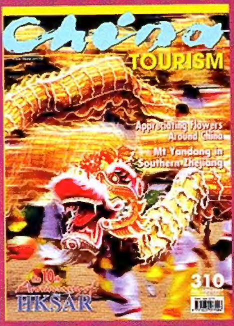
62 Special Themes

Happy Birthday! HKSAR

84 Challenges

The Adventurers' Dairies — Trekking Through Yading in Muli

Photos • Zhao Lao Article • Ah Ling


China
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Appreciating Flowers Around China
Mt Yandang in Southern Zhejiang
310
HKSAR

Cover: The heart of the dragon.
(by Adam Wong)

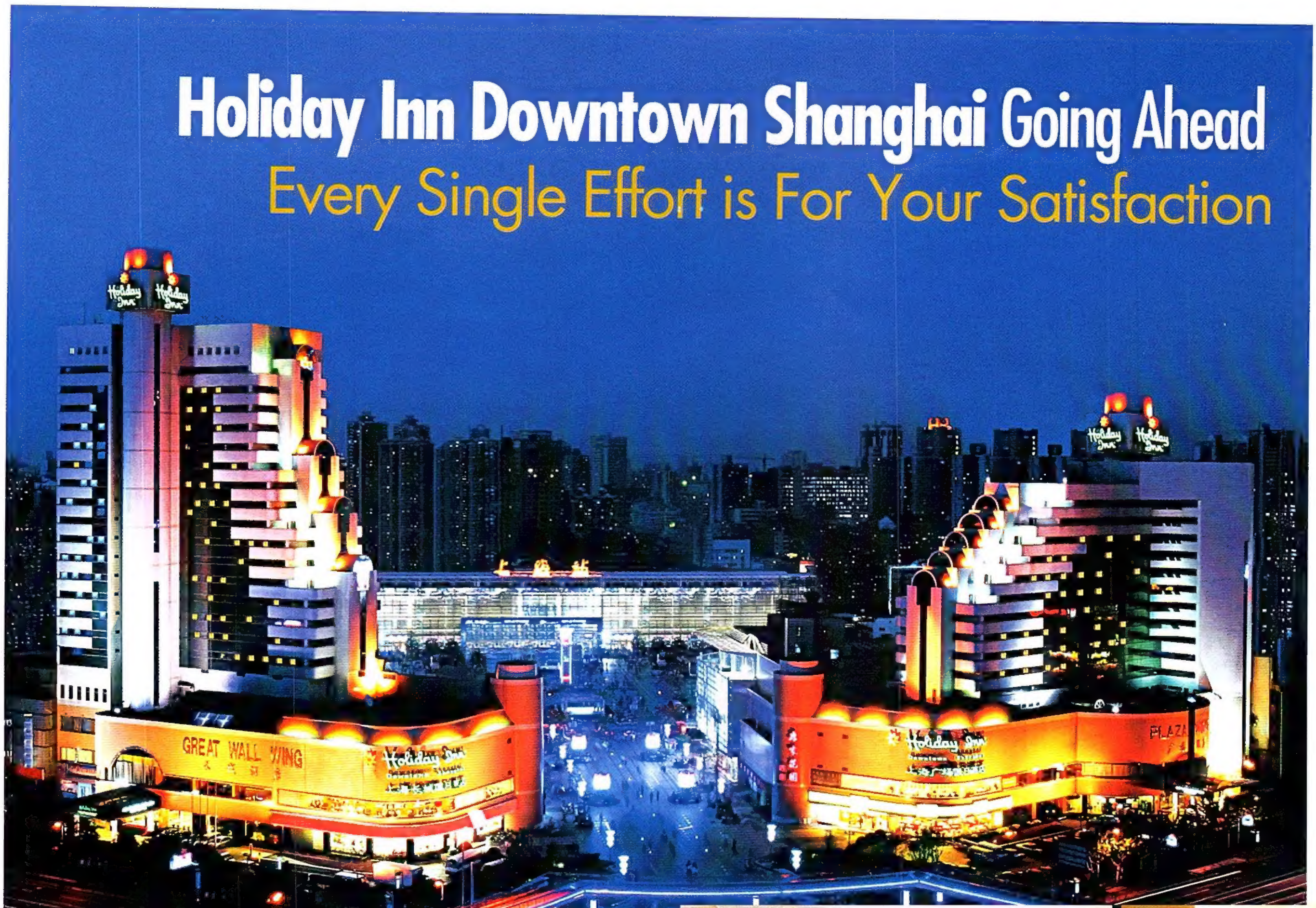
12

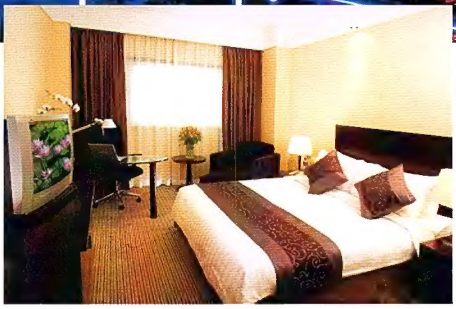
62

84

Holiday Inn Downtown Shanghai Going Ahead

Every Single Effort is For Your Satisfaction





In March this year, the Holiday Inn Downtown Shanghai has completed another batch of guestrooms renovation, which lead over 55 % of the guestroom refurbished in the past three years.

Refreshing Vision Surprises Your Eyes

The amazing interior design effect conducted by the colour of carpet and curtain will extend your sight by the elegant and tranquil environment created by the dominant colours of purple and brown. Combined with comfortable cushions, sheets, and bed, you are promised for a great night sleep after a busy day. Besides, you may be impressed by fashionable and modern paintings hanged in the guestroom or the corridor with fantastic lighting.

Personalized Design Summon You Up

Holiday Inn Downtown Shanghai recognizes the importance of your working condition. This is why they give weight to the working part of the room design. For example, an ergonomically-designed chair is specially designed to relieve spinal compression while you are sitting at a desk. The chair can automatically reduce stress and tension in the back and leg muscles. The best-serviced broadband access system also connects the world no matter where you are!

Higher Expectation of Your Stay

Throughout its history, the Holiday Inn brand continues to grow while maintaining the old values, both by safeguarding the quality and by offering the consumer genuinely valuable production. Equally, Holiday Inn Downtown Shanghai focuses on guests satisfaction. They understand your needs and dedicate to ensure the delivery of promises from everywhere.

No doubt every exciting innovation and every step of moving ahead are coming from guest-oriented focus. In spite of the constant hardware upgrade, the smiling staff, the positive attitude and the attentive services make your stay as comfortable and memorable.

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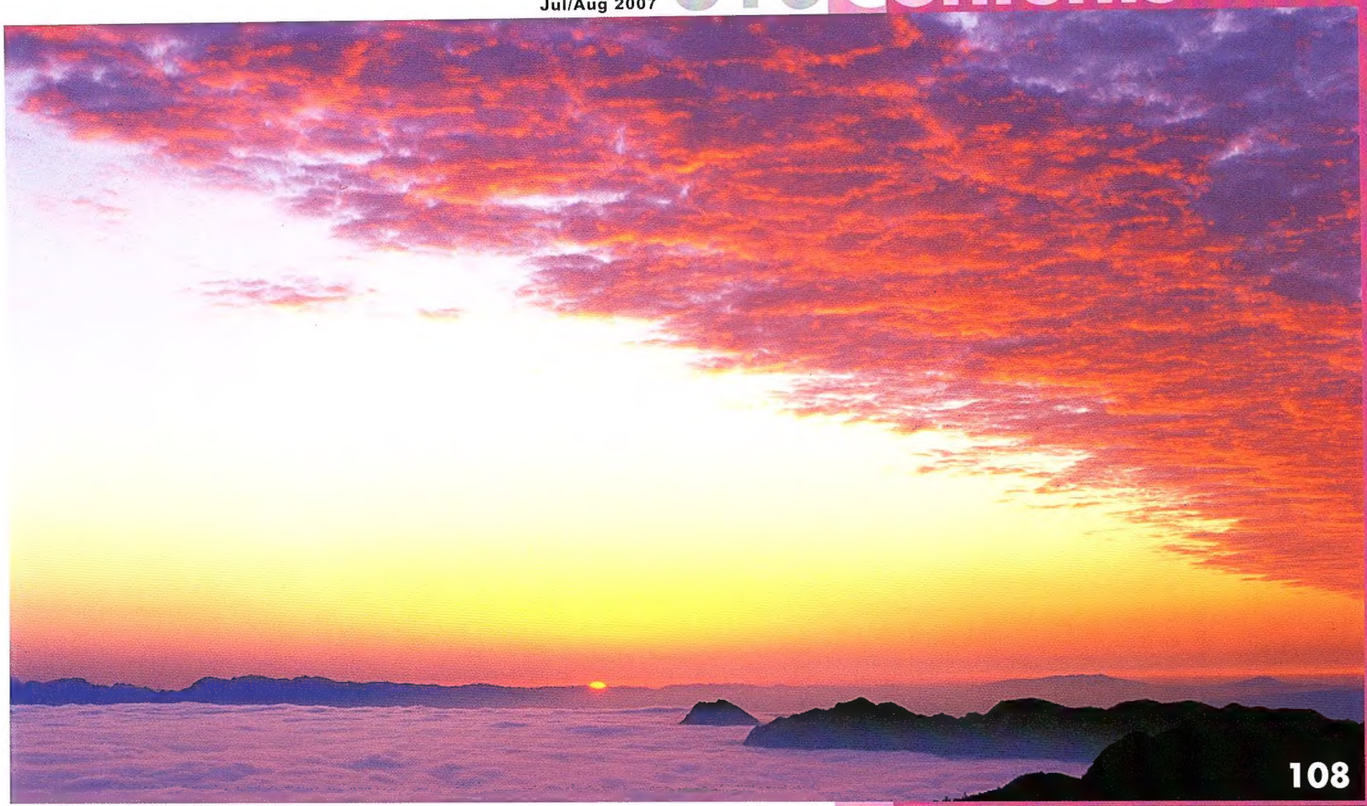
Jul/Aug 2007

310 Contents


108

90 Discoveries

The Tuyu Gully at the Foot of Flaming Mountain

Photos & Article • Huang Yanhong

The word 'Tuyu' means 'impassable.' However, when it applies on a land it has brought something magical. The Tuyu Gully located at the foot of Flaming Mountain in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is home to several ancient cultures, Buddhism and Islam, and is also home to the first Chinese who practiced Islam.

98 Culture

Ingenious Farmers' Drawings

Article • Chan Yat Nin

Chinese farmer painters all like painting familiar aspects of their hometown and daily life, which lends their drawings a distinct countryside flavour.

104 Excursions

Charm of Beijing's Outskirts

Photos • Yu Qiong Article • Florence Chan

The first breath of clean air and a taste of unsophisticated life in Beijing were finally tasted by the author when she paid the visit to a remote village out the city's Fifth Ring Road...

136 Customs

Chuichuiqiang Opera of the Bai in Dali

Photos & Article • Yang Hongwen

138 Know Thy Roots

Chinese Family & Clan Names

Text • Kristy Wong Research • Suzan So

There are more than 100 surnames in China. How were these Chinese surnames created? Why the Chinese always claim themselves as 'descendents of the Yandi and Huangdi'? This new column will explain the interesting history of Chinese surnames.

141 Calendar
144 Next Issue

90

98

104

Wide Eyes Shoot

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Vice Director & Editor-in-Chief	Wang Miao
Deputy General Managers	Kathy Wong, James Jiang, Connie Lee, Sylvia Ng
Executive Editor-in-Chief	Ma Yiu Chun
Deputy Editors-in-Chief	Tu Nai Hsien, Chan Yat Nin
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Editors	Angela Caughey, Chris Cummins, Jennifer Eagleton, Jo Kent, Patricia Hutton
Art Director	Billy Cheng
Senior Designer	M. Y. Li
Designers	Y. Y. Lau, Joyce Lee, Bruce Yeung
Assistant Designer	Setsumi Tong
Advertising Manager	Celia Cheung, Yu Xifan
China Account Managers	Tung Wai Ning, Shi Tiantong, Senvi Zhang
Manager of Sales & Marketing Department	Connie Lee (concurrent)
Business Development Manager	James Jiang (concurrent)
Director of Accounts & Administration Dept.	Kathy Wong (concurrent)

Editorial Dept., Business Dept., Advertising Dept., Sales Dept. Tel: (852) 2561 8001
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Advertising Dept: ad@hkctp.com.hk
Sales & Marketing Dept: mktg@hkctp.com.hk
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Happy Anniversaries

We feel that this issue is exceptionally meaningful, because the HKSAR government and China Tourism Press celebrate their 10th and 27th anniversaries respectively. To be a member of Hong Kong society as well as being part of our company brings great happiness to the editors and we wish that all citizens and readers share this joyful moment!

The growth of a stable and prosperous society is not easy. When Hong Kong was established by Great Britain, it turned from being a small fishing community to an international city, blending the cultures from East and West. This was and still is, regarded as a miracle by the world. After Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the HKSAR survived many difficulties such as the Asian financial crisis, bird flu and SARS in early years. Fortunately, with endless endeavour and strong spirit, we have overcome such problems one by one. Today, the territory shines even brighter than before and successfully exercises the 'One Country, Two Systems' model of government.

Our magazine has also come a long way and grown over its 27-year history. Many readers have shared the ups and downs over the decades with *China Tourism*. As recently as the 1980s, the Hong Kong public still had no deep understanding of China. Nowadays, they feel more familiar with our mother country. Many of our stories have inspired them to travel to China; some of them have even begun an exploration of China lasting several years! And many have come back to share their experiences and amaze our editors with tales of their journeys. This is the greatest present we can receive on our anniversary and provides the inspiration for all of our staff to work harder to create even more brilliant stories!

At this precious moment in time, let us hope that our magazine and our society continue to improve as we strive together to reach new heights. As we have both proven, miracles are possible!

(by Liu Bojun)

A Brand New Paris in 2007

This year, enjoy your new date with the Ile de France —

- ♦ *16,000 boutiques*
- ♦ *Annual sales*
- ♦ *Re-opening of the musee Galliera*
- ♦ *Opening of the jewellery gallery at the musée des Arts décoratifs*
- ♦ *Ready-to-wear fashion shows, Cristobal Balenciaga, Jean Paul Gaultier and Régine Chopinot at the Musée de la Mode et du Textile, Castelbajac retrospective, etc.*

- ♦ *The Agricultural Trade Show*
- ♦ *Delicacies from all across the globe*
- ♦ *A trend for organic food*
- ♦ *New restaurants: Restaurant des Bains-Douches, L'Eclaireur, Bath's, le Moulin de la Galette, etc.*

Sight-seeing

- ♦ *The 30th anniversary of the Centre Pompidou*
- ♦ *The reopening of the Grande Halle de la Villette, the theâtre des Trois-Baudets and the Forum des images*
- ♦ *Inaugurations of the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, the Cite de l'architecture et du partrimoine, the glarie des Gobelins and the Maison des Métallos.*

- ♦ *Over 300 events daily*
- ♦ *Ice-skating under the Eiffel Tower at Nuit Blanche*
- ♦ *Appreciate 150 000 lightbulbs illuminating the Champs Elysées at Christmas*
- ♦ *A wealth of choice from among cinema, opera, theatre, bars, clubs and lounge bars.*

- ♦ *Luxury hotels — the talk of the town, new venues to come, trips in up-and-coming districts.*
- ♦ *'Design' hotels, 'arty' hotels, 'high-tech' hotels, apartment hotels, cult hotels, etc.*

METROPOLITAIN
Transport

- ♦ *The last metro home — prolonged by an hour to 2:15 a.m. in 2007 on Saturday evening and on the eve of public holidays, or until dawn for club goers!*

and many more...

Photos courtesy of Paris Tourist Office

Urümqi Airport in Xinjiang to Expand

Urümqi's International Airport has started a 2.8 billion yuan (US$350 million) expansion project since April, enabling it to handle three times as many passengers as it does now. According to the China General Administration of Civil Aviation (CAAC), the Xinjiang airport has great potential to become an air transport hub in Central Asia as the number of passengers is growing by more than a million a year.

The renovation project includes the construction of a 48,000-square metres of new stores, nearly 106,000 square metres of terminal buildings, and an upgrade of other infrastructure facilities. Upon completion of the expansion in 2008, the 76-year old airport will be capable of handling 16.35 million passengers annually, up from the current 5.13 million. It will be able to handle 275,000 tons of cargo and 155,000 aircraft a year.

Mainland to Expand Cross-straits Charter Flight Services

The Chinese mainland is considering opening six more airports to non-stop charter flights across the Taiwan Straits to cope with rising passenger traffic. Currently, the mainland operates flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xiamen to Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan. The new airports will be located in Chengdu, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shenzhen, Dalian and Guilin. Airports in another seven cities — Tianjin, Fuzhou, Chongqing, Zhuhai, Shenyang, Qingdao and Guiyang — would be designated as alternate airports for emergency landings.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) would help if Taiwanese airplanes — for weather or aircraft reasons — needed to make an emergency landing at mainland airports open to charter flight services.

New China-Vietnam Highway Bridge to Open

A new highway bridge spanning more than a quarter of a kilometre over the Honghe (Red River) on the border Yunnan Province of China and Vietnam is expected to be completed and open to vehicles in this December. The bridge linking Southwest China's Yunnan Province, and Lao Cai, in Vietnam, will be the third on the Honghe River, when it flows out of China, constructed at Hekou, on the Chinese side.

The new bridge, 295 metres long and 21.5 metres wide, was necessary to allow transport of the growing volume of cross-border trade. It would ease pressure on the existing highway bridge and railway bridge.

The new bridge will connect with expressways running to Kunming, capital of Yunnan, and Hanoi in Vietnam, which would eventually cut the travel time between the cities from the present 17 hours to 13 hours.

Jinjiang Hotel Group to Boost Network

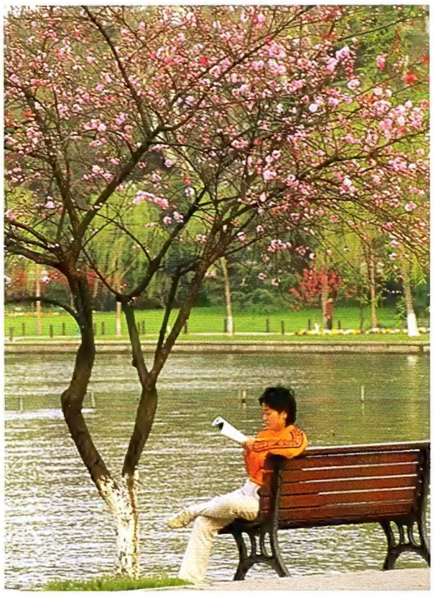
China's oldest and largest budget hotel chain Jinjiang Inn Co Ltd will add 400 new facilities, with 200 in service by 2010. Shanghai-based Jinjiang Inn currently has more than 200 outlets, and it will expand in Beijing, Tianjin, the Bohai Bay area and the country's provincial capitals and regional economic centres.

Jinjiang Inn has maintained an average annual occupancy rate of over 90 percent since it opened its first outlet near the Jinjiang Amusement Park in Shanghai in 1997.

City Emblem for Hangzhou

The government of Hangzhou, a famous tourist city in East China's Zhejiang Province, is soliciting designs from around the world for its city emblem. The logo should also be able to be understood by both Chinese and overseas tourists.

The winning entry, which will win 200, 000 yuan (US$25,000), would be unveiled in September after a public vote.



Mt Lushan,Jiujiang

The Jiujiang-Nanchang Railway to Begin

Construction on China's second passenger-only inter-city railroad has started in May. The line will run between Lushan, a popular summer resort in Jiujiang in East China's Jiangxi Province, and provincial capital Nanchang, where it will join the existing Beijing-Kowloon Railway as a north-south trunk route.

The Jiujiang-Nanchang Railway will be 131.27 km long, of which 96.91 km will be new. Costing six billion yuan to build, it will be a double-track road capable of carrying trains travelling at up to 200 km per hour. The railway is scheduled to be completed and in service in 2009. It will shorten the travel time from Jiujiang, on the southern side of the Yangtze River, to Nanchang from current 90 minutes to 40 minutes.

Chinese-Language Tours in 27 European Countries

China's National Tourism Administration announced that 27 European countries will be added to the list of approved destinations for Chinese tour groups from 1 September.

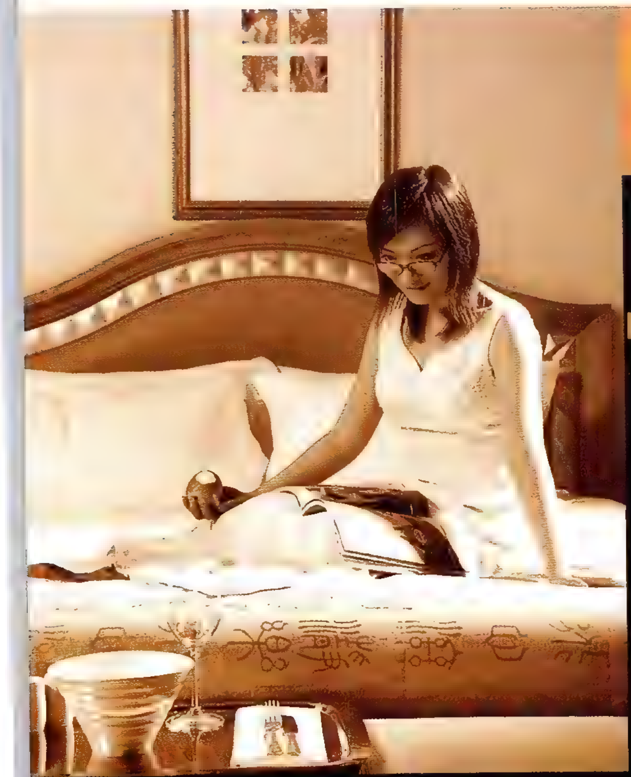
The Information Times reported that 28 countries and regions, including five European countries, have already opened their tourism markets to Chinese tourists so far. They include German, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Holland, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Tourism service in eight African countries that have signed memoranda with China will also come into effect soon. According to Tourism Office in Paris, about two million Chinese tourists are predicted to visit France in 2020, taking the second position behind Americans, compared to 600,000 in 2006.

First China Cultural Festival in Israel

Israeli audience will have a great opportunity to savour a variety of ancient Chinese culture in the next few months, as the first China Cultural Festival is going to be held in Israel starting from 20 May, 2007. The event includes a series of different Chinese cultural events will be held throughout Israel, including Chinese folk dance, folk music and songs, arts and crafts, photo exhibitions, plays and movies.

Jointly held by Chinese and Israeli governments, the festival is dedicated to mark the 15th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and will last for about six months until November 2007.

In the past 15 years, bilateral relations between China and Israel have witnessed a rapid development and scored remarkable achievements. On the political level, China and Israel have all along attached much importance to each other and have worked to build mutual trust in bilateral, regional and international affairs. The bilateral trade volume between the two nations has increased from 50 million U.S. dollars to 3.88 billion dollars over the past 15 years, with an average annual growth rate of 40 percent.



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Beijing

Beijing's Travel Agencies Receive Star Rating

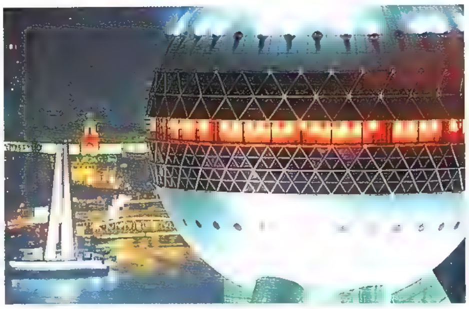
By this September, first group of travel agencies to receive star ratings travellers would be announced in Beijing, travellers will be able to choose travel agencies as easily as they got the star ratings.

Beijing's travel industry has grown quickly, now with 222 travel agencies offering international travel services and 575 domestic. In 2006, total revenue for travel agencies in Beijing is 31.7 billion yuan, an increase of 43% with a net gain of 2.4 billion yuan, an increase of 64% during the same period last year.

Besides the impressive gains, establishing a standard credit system of travel agencies is also important. With thousands choices of agencies, customers are hard pressed to make the best choice.

Shanghai

Two Spots in Shanghai Listed in Top Scenic Sites



Among scores of China's tourist attractions, Shanghai's Oriental Pearl TV Tower and Wild Animal Park are included in the first batch of five-A graded scenic spots. Every applicant must have received 600,000 visitors annually, at least 50,000 overseas visitors, in each of the past three years. Both of them have advantages in 12 aspects, including traffic, security, sanitation, comprehensive administration and protection of resource and environment.

The Oriental Pearl TV Tower, serving the city with more than nine television channels and upwards of 10 FM radio channels has a science fantasy exhibition on the ground floor, and is the world's third tallest TV and radio tower. A hotel with 25 elegant rooms and lounges occupies its five smaller spheres. Tourists may have dinner at the rotating restaurant on the top 'pearl' of the tower and enjoy a panoramic sightseeing.

Shanghai Wild Animal Park, has over 200 rare species and over 10,000 animals from all over the world. It is divided into two areas: The walking area allows a close look at many animals on foot, while the buses take tourists among wild and large sized animals, such as giraffes, zebras, white rhinoceros and hunting leopards.

Beijing

Water-free Technologies Introduced in Traders Hotel, Beijing

Traders Hotel, Beijing has become one of the first properties in the city to install water-free urinals, saving thousands of litres of fresh water each year and presenting the reality of a 'Green Olympics.' As an Olympic Partner Hotel and leading four-star hotel, the property has put its first priority on the environment as well as preparations for the Games, and is currently installing the environmental-friendly water-free urinals to all male washrooms in public areas.

In addition to the water-free urinals, the 570 room hotel has set aside further funds to tackle the acute water shortage in Beijing. All guestroom toilet tanks have been changed in its capacity which automatically saving three litres per flush, and new water saving shower taps have also been installed in all guest rooms decreasing the flow of water by 4 litres per minute.

Website: www.tradershotels.com

Tibet

Digital City Supervision System Set Up in Qamdo

Qamdo has implemented 'digital city supervision' system and 110 digital video surveillances have been equipped in urban key units, road segments, schools and Guro and Karub townships.

Law officials can watch the dynamic images from 12 monitors in the monitoring centre. The system is in advanced stage in the region. It combines '110'. '119' and '122' together and united movement can be achieved in case of safety, traffic, fire alarm events. It cannot only share resources, optimize the capability of police, but also prevent investment waste.

Zhejiang

Night Voyage Boat on West Lake

The annual night touring boats on West Lake, one of the most charming of tourist cities and the major tourist attractions of Hangzhou, include the larger 'pleasure boats' able to carry dozens of tourists, as well as the smaller 'self-drive boats' that carry several tourists, resumed their voyages, providing more travel highlights to tourists during summer time.

A trip on the pleasure boat takes about 50 minutes. Self-drive boats will tour on restricted courses, but offer tourists more flexibility and freedom while onboard. All the boats are equipped with GPS. The night touring boats will continue to operate until October.

Beijing

Forbidden City Among First 5A Tourist Sites

Four world-famous tourist attractions in Beijing have become the nation's first 5-A-rated tourist sites.

The Beijing Tourism Administration said the Forbidden City, Badaling section of the Great Wall, Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven were granted the new honour, which declares that these places are able to provide top tourist-oriented service. Previously, the top level for tourist sites in China was 4A.

Hainan

Sanya Joins National Rail Network

China's national rail-ferry network has been extended to the country's southernmost city of Sanya in Hainan Province.

Sanya's inclusion is a 364-km rail link with Haikou, capital of Hainan Province. The service started on 18 April, allowing trains to travel at up to 160 km per hour, which is almost double the previous speed. The service, starting in Sanya, would run through nine cities or counties before linking with the ferry to the mainland.

With this service, passengers could travel to major mainland cities without transferring. It is expected to carry up to 10 million tons of freight a year. The project of the rail link to Sanya completed within one year, cost 2.3 billion yuan funded by the provincial government and the Ministry of Railways.

Tibet/Guangdong

China Airlines Recovers Guangzhou-Lhasa Flight

In order to encourage more people to visit Tibet during the high tourist season starting from April, China Airlines will resume the direct flight of Guangzhou-Lhasa recently.

There will be three types of flights: First type, the flight will be operated by Air Bus 319's and will stop at Dêqên in Yunnan Province during the trip. It will be increased to three per week in May and seven in July. Second type, flights of Guangzhou-Lhasa with stop at Chongqing during the trip. Third type, flights to Lhasa every day. Taking this advantage, passengers no need to change flights in Chongqing.

Inner Mongolia

Deserts Develop Desert Tourism

The Tourism Bureau of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region had set up direction signs, and rescue and communication facilities in the Tenggar and Hobq deserts. These activities help to safe independent explorers.

One person died and more than 50 were rescued after becoming stranded in the Hobq Desert during the May Day holiday in 2006. Most of the tourists were college students, belonged to several self-organized travel groups. Police have urged adventurous tourists to exercise prudence before travelling into the deserts.

The Tenggar Desert, the fourth largest desert in China, covering 43,000 sq km. It is interspersed with lake basins and marshes, as well as hills, mounds and plains. The Hobq Desert, another favourite site for desert explorers, is a stretch of 16,100 sq km of shifting sand dunes.

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Dance of the Flying Wings

Kushiro Wetland National Park in Hokkaido, Japan is home to more than 600 red-crowned cranes (called *tancho* in Japanese). From early November, flocks of these stunning birds can be seen performing an exotic ritual dance to attract the opposite sex. This magnificent event on the global bird-watching calendar draws numerous photo enthusiasts from around Japan and the world.

Photos & Article · Zhong Yonghong

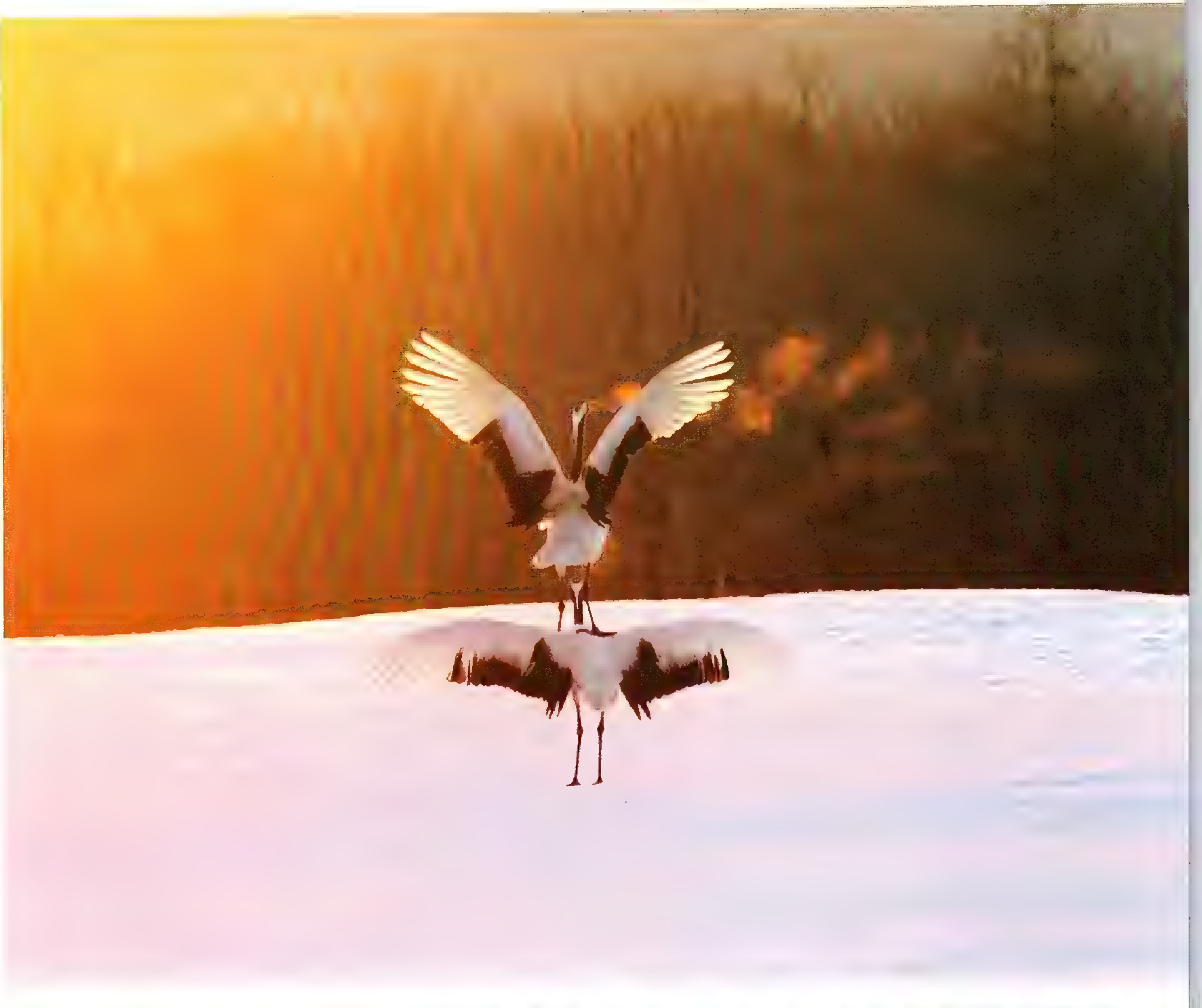
The Itoh Japanese Crane Sanctuary and the Akkan International Crane Centre are prime observation spots for those wishing to capture images of the cranes. In winter, in the nearby marshland, the cranes gather for warmth at the many hot springs. Locals leave food for the cranes at regular times, making it easy for photographers to capture the colour and flamboyance of the red-crowned cranes' magnificent dance scenes.

Itoh Japanese Crane Sanctuary

In the mornings, expect to see a large group of red-crowned cranes looking for food at the Itoh Sanctuary — a wonderful place for photographers to capture the flying-winged dance. The sanctuary is about an hour from Tsurui and it would be good to set off at 5 a.m. for your photo jaunt. Red-crowned cranes usually hunt for food in the morning and at twilight. Once the cranes have filled their stomachs, they start dancing and courting mates. The frosty mornings are perfect for capturing, the sunrays shimmering in the warm air exhaled by the cranes.

Remarks: Arrive at the sanctuary early and set up your photo equipment. It is most likely that the first pair of cranes arriving in the area will mate after their ritual dance. Once more cranes have arrived, the scene will be a bit chaotic, making photographic omposition more difficult.

Best time to shoot: Set off before dawn for an early start.



Akkan International Crane Centre, Kushiro

At noon, you can pack up your photographic equipment and head to the Akkan International Crane Centre 20 km away from Tsurui. An admission fee is required. At around 2 p.m. every day, staff of the centre bring out fresh raw fish to feed the wild red-crowned cranes. The smell of the fish attracts other animals as well, such as foxes, white-tailed eagles, owls and so on. When the centre's staff throw the raw fish onto the ground, the various animals and cranes jostle one another for the food and fighting can be vigorous. It is a great moment for photographers to capture.

Best time to shoot: After 2 p.m.

Red-crowned Cranes

Red-crowned cranes, a species of the crane family, are also known as 'fairy cranes' in China. They are named for the red 'caps' on the tops of their heads. They are unique to Southeast Asia. The cranes are mainly found at the source of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers, which mostly lie in China's Qinghai Province. They can also be found in far-east Russia and Japan's Hokkaido. Their habitat is mainly marshland and marshy meadow. They feed on fish and prawns in shallow water, soft-shell animals and the roots and stems of certain kinds of plants. What they eat varies from season to season due to the climate. Red-crowned cranes are migratory birds that usually spend their winters in south-eastern China and the lower bend of the Yangtze River, the Korean Gulf and various parts of Japan. They practise monogamy, usually having just one mate through life. Therefore, in Southeast Asia, the bird is a symbol of good luck, loyalty and longevity. Recently, the conservation bureau of Heilongjiang Province revealed that after several years of polling in different parts of China, the National Forestry Bureau had nominated the red-crowned crane to the State Council as the only candidate for the national bird of China.

Kikurin Farm

Kikurin Farm is a wonderful spot for capturing beautiful images of red-crowned cranes with the setting sun as the backdrop. The sun sets earlier in Hokkaido, starting shortly after 3 p.m. Around this time, flocks of red-crowned cranes, having eaten their fill, can be seen flying home above the farm, silhouetted against the gorgeous sky.

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

Travel Tips

Climate

Kushiro marshland is located in Hokkaido, which is an area of the highest north latitude in Japan. There are huge climatic differences between Hokkaido and other parts of Japan. Spring does not come until late April. The average temperature in April is only 5°C. The Sakura (or cherry blossom) blooms in May. The climate of June and July is different from other parts of Japan and there is no rainy season. Summer only starts in July. August is the hottest month of the year and the average temperature is around 24°C. It gets cooler after September and October. From November onwards, there is snow (the average temperature is around 4°C). The best time to take photos of red-crowned cranes is January, when the temperature often falls below -10°C).

Transport

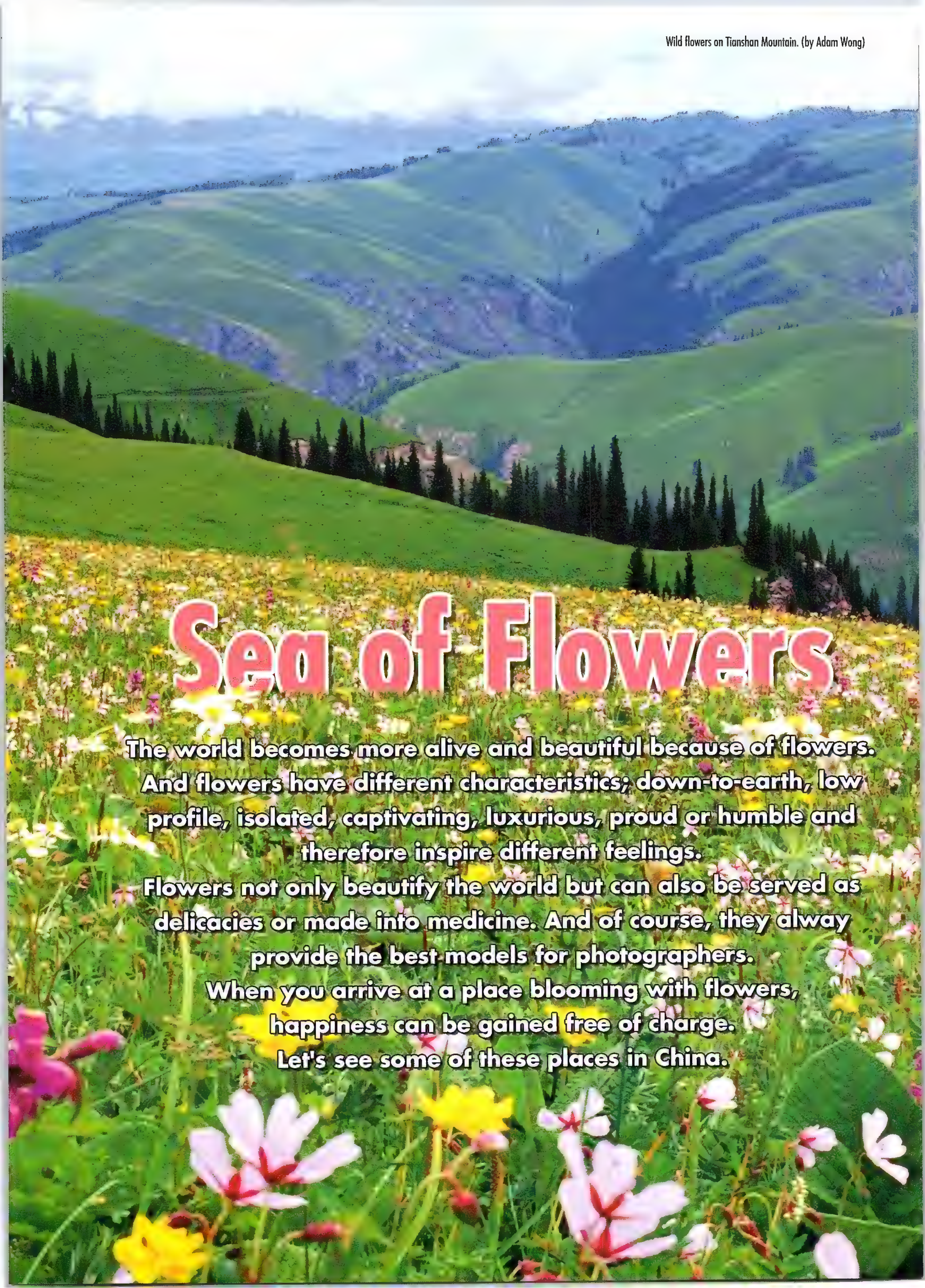
Fly from Hong Kong to Tokyo Narita Airport and take an airport bus to Haneda Airport (one hour), then catch an inland flight to Kushiro.

There are some large car rental companies at Kushiro Airport and their offices close only after the last flight of the day has arrived.

Accommodation

Most hotels in Tsurui charge HK$600 ~ 800/person (breakfast included).

Reference website: www.hotel-taito.co.jp



Wild flowers on Tianshan Mountain. (by Adam Wong)

Sea of Flowers

The world becomes more alive and beautiful because of flowers.
And flowers have different characteristics; down-to-earth, low profile, isolated, captivating, luxurious, proud or humble and therefore inspire different feelings.
Flowers not only beautify the world but can also be served as delicacies or made into medicine. And of course, they alway provide the best models for photographers.
When you arrive at a place blooming with flowers, happiness can be gained free of charge.
Let's see some of these places in China.

Rape flower fields in Luoping, Yunnan. (by Adam Wong)

Lavender in Yili, Xinjiang. (by Adam Wong)

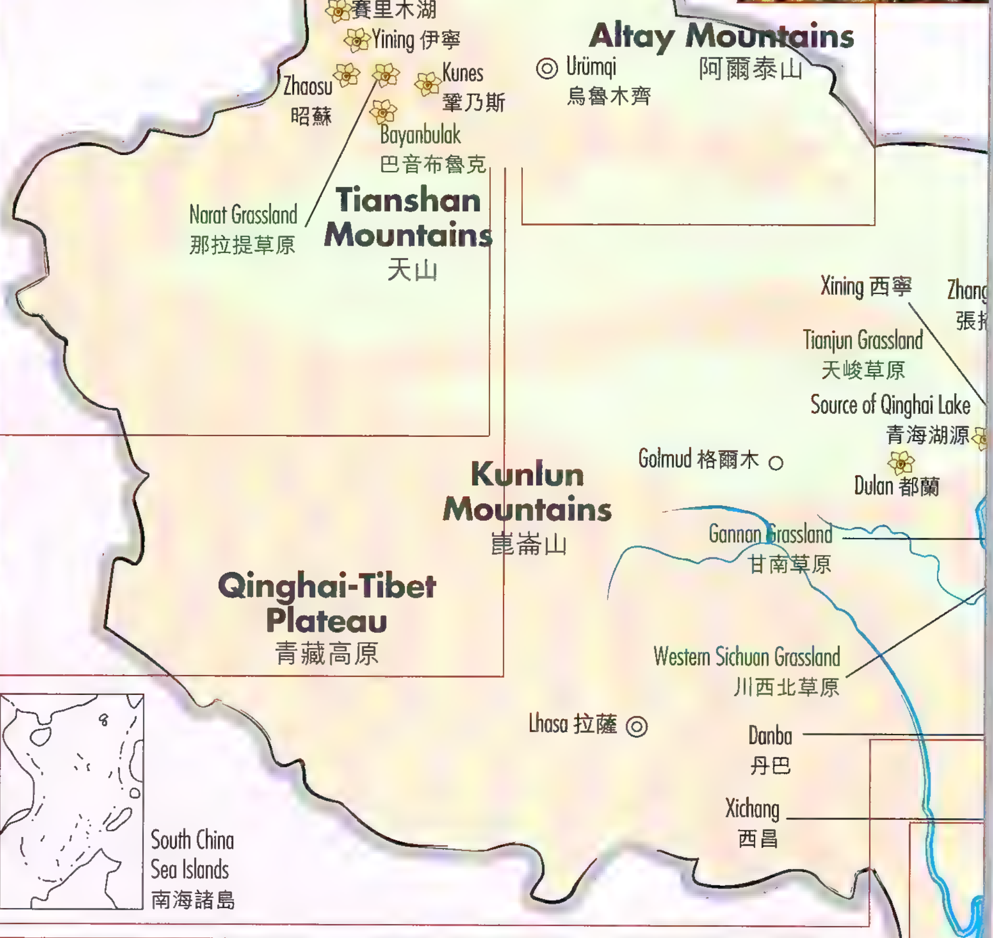
Appreciating Flowers Around China

Wide flowers • Adam Wong

Wide flowers • Adam Wong

Rape flowers • Li Shengli

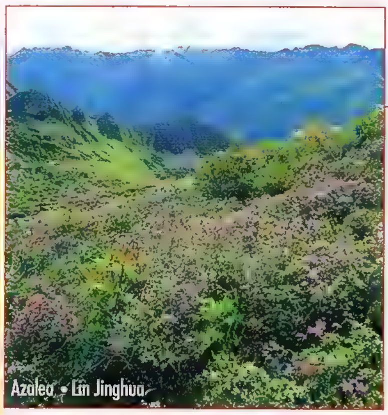
Sunflower • Zhu Jie

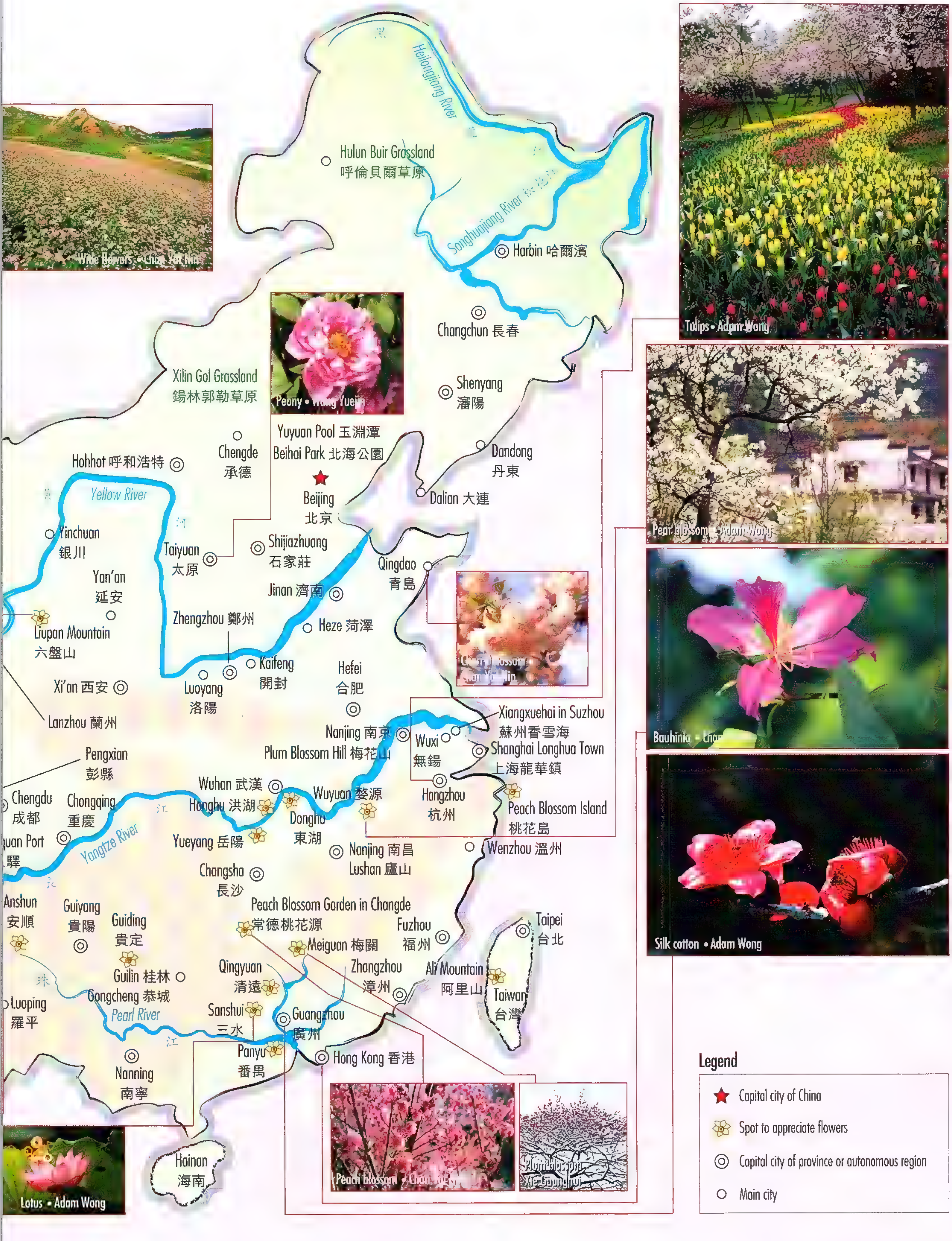

Grassland in Northern Xinjiang
北疆草原
Sayram Lake
賽里木湖
Yining 伊寧
Zhaosu
昭蘇
Kunes
鞏乃斯
Bayanbulak
巴音布魯克
Narat Grassland
那拉提草原
Tianshan Mountains
天山
Ürümqi
烏魯木齊
Altay Mountains
阿爾泰山
Xining 西寧
Zhang
張掖
Tianjun Grassland
天峻草原
Source of Qinghai Lake
青海湖源
Golmud 格爾木
Dulan 都蘭
Kunlun Mountains
崑崙山
Gannan Grassland
甘南草原
Qinghai-Tibet Plateau
青藏高原
Western Sichuan Grassland
川西北草原
Lhasa 拉薩
Danba
丹巴
Xichang
西昌
South China Sea Islands
南海諸島
Dali
大理
Kunming
昆明

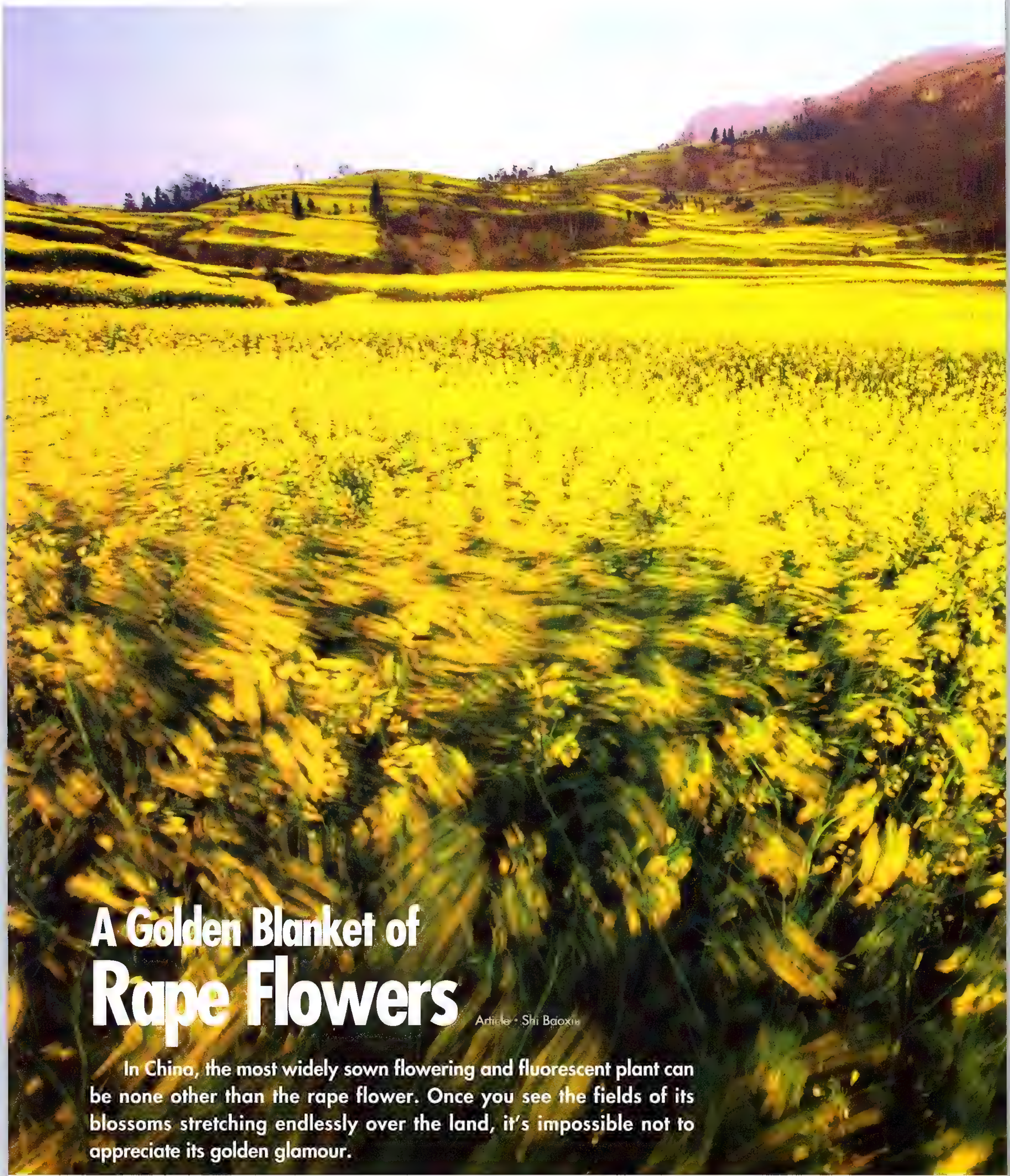
Snow lotus • Sun Jiabin

Pear blossom • Adam Wong

Rape flowers • Adam Wong


Azalea • Lin Jinghua

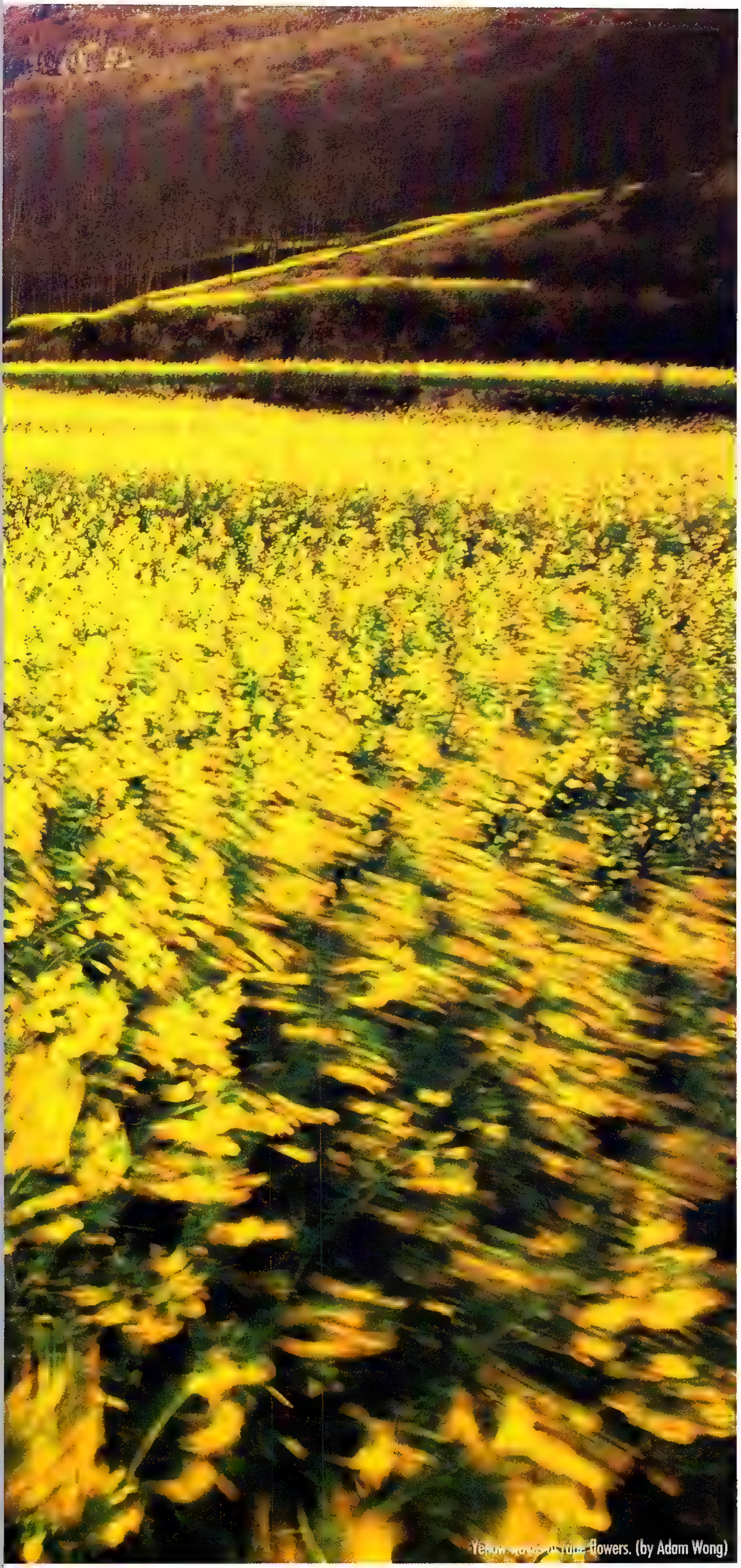

Wild flowers • Chan Yat Nin
Heilongjiang River
Hulun Buir Grassland
呼倫貝爾草原
Songhuajiang River
Harbin 哈爾濱
Tulips • Adam Wong
Changchun 長春
Peony • Wang Yuejin
Xilin Gol Grassland
錫林郭勒草原
Shenyang
瀋陽
Yuyuan Pool 玉淵潭
Beihai Park 北海公園
Chengde
承德
Hohhot 呼和浩特
Dandong
丹東
Yellow River
Beijing
北京
Dalian 大連
Pear blossom • Adam Wong
Yinchuan
銀川
Taiyuan
太原
Shijiazhuang
石家莊
Qingdao
青島
Yan'an
延安
Jinan 濟南
Liupan Mountain
六盤山
Zhengzhou 鄭州
Heze 菏澤
Cherry blossom
Chan Yat Nin
Xi'an 西安
Luoyang
洛陽
Kaifeng
開封
Hefei
合肥
Lanzhou 蘭州
Bauhinia • Chan
Xiangxuehai in Suzhou
蘇州香雪海
Nanjing 南京
Plum Blossom Hill 梅花山
Wuxi
無錫
Shanghai Longhua Town
上海龍華鎮
Pengxian
彭縣
Wuhan 武漢
Chengdu
成都
Chongqing
重慶
Honghu 洪湖
Wuyuan 婺源
Hangzhou
杭州
Peach Blossom Island
桃花島
Donghu
東湖
Yangtze River
Yueyang 岳陽
Nanjing 南昌
Lushan 廬山
Wenzhou 溫州
Changsha
長沙
Silk cotton • Adam Wong
Anshun
安順
Guiyang
貴陽
Guiding
貴定
Peach Blossom Garden in Changde
常德桃花源
Fuzhou
福州
Taipei
台北
Meiguan 梅關
Guilin 桂林
Qingyuan
清遠
Zhangzhou
漳州
Ali Mountain
阿里山
Taiwan
台灣
Gongcheng 恭城
Luoping
羅平
Pearl River
Sanshui
三水
Guangzhou
廣州
Panyu
番禺
Hong Kong 香港
Nanning
南寧
Hainan
海南
Lotus • Adam Wong
Peach blossom • Chan Yat Nin
Plum blossom
Xie Guanghui
Legend
★ Capital city of China
Spot to appreciate flowers
◎ Capital city of province or autonomous region
○ Main city



A Golden Blanket of Rape Flowers

Article · Shi Baoxin

In China, the most widely sown flowering and fluorescent plant can be none other than the rape flower. Once you see the fields of its blossoms stretching endlessly over the land, it's impossible not to appreciate its golden glamour.



Yellow waves of rape flowers. (by Adam Wong)

Despite the fortune spent on manually piling up hundreds of thousands of chrysanthemums and thousands of pieces of golden armour to create a visually sensational scene in Zhang Yimou's film *Curse of the Golden Flower*, any natural vista of rape flowers would surely be able to outshine it.

Plain Flowers with Great Vitality

The blooming of rape flowers adds bright colour to spring. Rapeseeds are an essential material for home cooking. Also, almost 30 to 40 percent of honey as a whole comes from rape flowers. Many of our earth's flowers have their peculiarities — being very delicate or too gorgeous, or like to be left alone.... Only rape flowers stand calmly among the crops, woods and grass in rough country. Their tender leaves can survive the cold temperature down to about minus 10 degrees Celsius; their flowers remain in full bloom in a storm, and look even brighter in the scorching heat of the sun.

The Earliest Rape Blossoms

Where can we find such wonderful flowers? In fact, they are spread everywhere and can survive anywhere in the world.

In China, rape flowers bloom first in Luoping, Wenshan in southeastern Yunnan Province and the neighbouring mountainous regions in Guangxi and Guizhou. Every year right after the Spring Festival, these yellow flowers appear in the mountains and fields. In this area of karst topography, the weathered isolated peaks serve as a perfect platform for appreciating flowers. Gazing from a height, the golden flowers are like a flowing flood that closes in around scattered islands of lonely peaks. Rape flowers can last for over a month and they will wither around March when the second group begin to bloom in provinces south of the Yangtze River — Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei. Rape fields are more thickly scattered in the areas along the Fuchun and Xin'an rivers in the upper reaches of the Qiantang River; around Lake Taihu and the old towns of Zhouzhuang and Tongli in Jiangsu; in Jiangxi's scenic areas of Longhu Mountain, Guifeng Peak, Mt Lushan; or around the ancient villages in Maoyuan County and the ancient villages in Huizhou, Anhui Province. Every spring, the strikingly bright golden colour of the rape flowers bursts forth. Set off by the green mountains, clear waters and ancient villages, they form a fantastically pleasing picture.

Flowing Yellow Waves

The spring rape flowers come a bit later in Sichuan and Chongqing. On the winding terraced land of the hills, patches and layers of golden rape flowers and fresh green horsebeans and peas, dotted with pinkish flowers, stand in sharp bright contrast yet form a compatible assembly. This is the most appealing season of the year.

In April and May, the yellow waves of rape flowers have reached the middle and lower reaches areas of the Yellow River. By then, it is mid spring in Shandong, Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi. Green wheat sprouts are more than knee-high, interspersed with areas of neatly-arranged yellow rape, resembling a Tibetan woman's colourful skirt. During the Qing Ming Festival (also known as Tomb-sweeping Festival which usually falls on 5 April), the Chinese people are accustomed to paying homage to the Yellow Emperor at his mausoleum in Shaanxi. On the way there, we had a marvellous view of a terraced land on a loess mountain range, totally covered with rape flowers. The bright undulating contour stretched for dozens of kilometres from east to west like a spectacular huge yellow dragon.

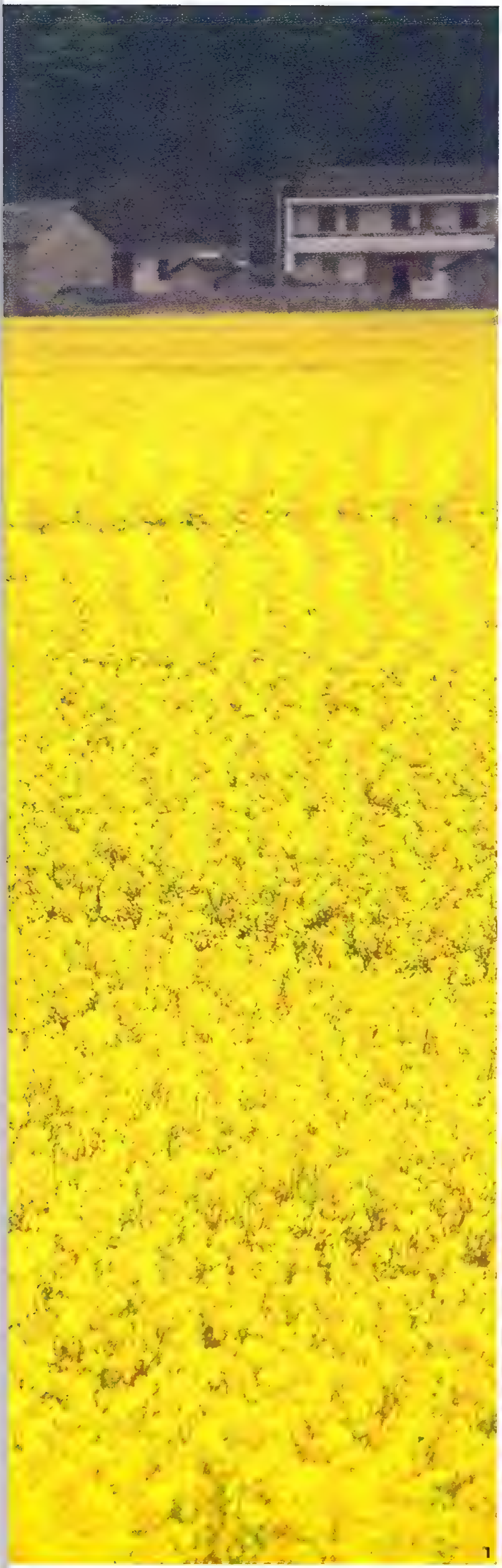
In the Gorge of Qilian Mountain

A more magnificent view appears one or two months later on the Qinghai Plateau. In the gorge of the Datong River between the Qilian and Daban Mountains you can see a blanket of rape flowers all over the land. The extensive rolling mountains seem to resemble the strong build of ancient warriors, where the bright rape flower and deep green wheat fields are woven into their colourful armours. Going further west through the sea of flowers to the Qingshizui Town, right after the Menyuan County seat, all that meets your eyes are golden rape fields stretching to the horizon. It is a world of sheer yellow flowers in this vast area extending south to the Daban Mountain, north to the southern foot of Mt Lenglong in the Qilian Mountain range, east to Xianlai Gorge, and west to Mt Jingyang. Roads appear as grey crossing lines in this sea of flowers and the dark farmers' houses are like fleets floating in an ocean. Such a boundless view of rape flowers is also available at Ili's Zhaosu in western Xinjiang.

Striking Contrast of Yellow and Blue at Qinghai Lake

Driving over the Daban Mountain to Xining after leaving Menyuan, and then going westward along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, I could see rape flowers again near the Riyue (Sun and Moon) Mountain. Once over it, there are stretches of wilderness, and herds of cattle and sheep grazing on the grasslands among the blooming flowers. Then there are no more villages and crops, to say nothing of rape flowers. But once we passed Daotanghe Town, leading to the Qinghai Lake, I could smell a strong fragrance of

Rape fields by the Taihu Lake in Jiangsu (by Xie Guanghui)



flowers and see the yellow pollen left by bees bumping into our windscreen. Pretty soon the yellow sea of rape flowers and azure blue Qinghai Lake came into view. Both extending far across the plateau, these belts of yellow and blue were an immense contrast, probably more so than any other two colours in the world. Maybe this is the effect of so-called complementary colours.

From the shipyard to the holiday resort area of the Qinghai Lake, there are rape flowers all along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, connecting the Qinghai Lake and Mt Nanshan. Looking down on the sea of yellow flowers and Qinghai Lake from the slope of Mt Nanshan, it seemed to me that the Qinghai-Tibet Highway was as humble and thin as a hair.

The Beekeeper Chases Flowers

On one side of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway there are two or three grey tents about every 100 metres, surrounded by some 50 wooden boxes. These are beekeepers' 'post stations.' Evading cautiously the densely flying bees, I came to a family of three. The couple have a three-year-old daughter, a lively little dog and half a dozen chickens. The host served me a cup of fragrant water with honey as he told me a story of their flower-chasing life. He came from Dazhou's Guang'an in Sichuan, the hometown of Deng Xiaoping. As he made frequent honey-collecting trips to Yunnan, he came to know a girl from Yunnan's Wenshan who is now his wife. They settled in Wenshan. Every winter, they feed bees with sweet water to cope with the two difficult months. In February, they first move their bees to where the turnip flowers are in Wenshan, then on to the rape flowers in Luoping area. After that, they head for his hometown

1. In a sea of flowers. (by Adam Wong)

2. The rape field becomes a children's amusement park. (by Li Dan)

2

in Sichuan, also for rape flowers and the Chinese milk vetches as well. In May, they follow the Sichuan-Shaanxi Highway to reach western and northern Shaanxi for rape and acacia flowers. In July and August they are up on the Qinghai Plateau, roaming around the Huangnan Prefecture and Huzhu, Menyuan and Qinghai Lake areas, collecting rape flowers and wild flowers on the grassland. When these flowers have died off, they move to the Mt Liupan area at the juncture of Shaanxi, Gansu and Xingxia for the buckwheat flowers. With the coming of the frost in October they return to Xianshan in Yunnan. The following year they start all over again.

Pointing at the little puppy and her daughter, our hostess said the girl was born on the road while chasing the flowers. Staying in the hospital for just five days after the labour, she hit the road again. 'I gave her the name Yaoqiong, hoping that she will become as accomplished as the female writer

Qiong Yao in Taiwan.'

Such lovely views of fields of rape flowers attract us — urban residents bored with busy city life — as well as many keen photographers from hundreds of kilometres away. But for farmers and beekeepers, they are actually a way to make a living. How many people can see the reality of the hardship in making a living in such a way?

Translated by L. Yu

About Rape Flowers

The rape is an edible annual herb belonging to the *Brassica* genus in the *Cruciferae* family. Its fragrant, hermaphrodite flowers have four petals shaped like a cross at the end of the stem. The dark green leaves are broad and alternate (a leaf arrangement where each leaf occurs singly on each node). Its fruit is composed of two carpels, with the pod cracking when ripe to turn out dark purple seeds, which contain up to 35 percent oil and are one of China's major oil-bearing crops.

Rape flower pollen is a rich source of honey. The common Chinese cabbage and its varieties — leaf mustard, white turnip, and purple radish are all close relatives. Rape grows widely throughout China's north, northwest, southwest and Yangtze River valley provinces, as well as all around the world.

1. Rape fields weave a pattern on the Riyue Mountains like the armour of warriors. (by Shi Baoxiu)

2. Rape flowers outside the Luoping Village in Yunnan. (by Adam Wong)

3. A beekeeping couple and their child chasing the blooming rape flowers. (by Shi Baoxiu)

4. Rape belongs to the *Cruciferae* family and is a major cash crop. (by Shi Baoxiu)

5. A beekeeper by the Qinghai Lake. (by Lin Jinghua)

Lotus:

Clean in a World of Muck

Article · Huang Yanhong

From the Chinese perspective, the most laudable feature of the lotus flower is that it grows out of muck without being defiled; meanwhile its seed, root and seedpod are all practically useful as either food or medicine.

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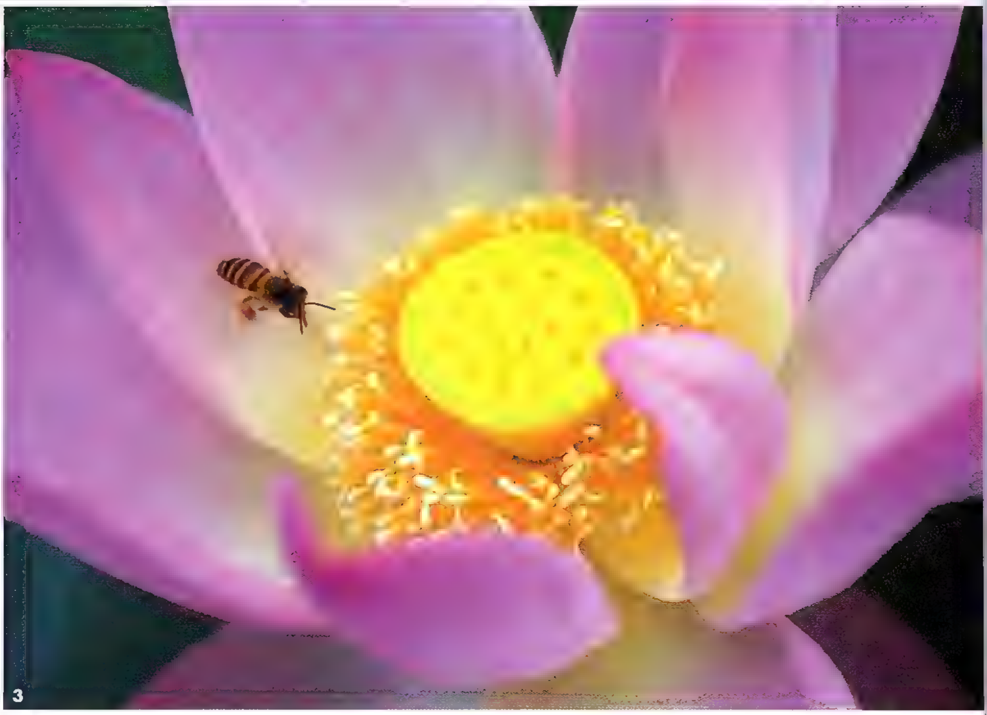

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1. Sunset at West Lake in Hangzhou. (by Shao Dalang)

2. Lotus buds at Honghu Lake in Shenzhen. (by Adam Wong)

3. Bees are drawn to blooming lotuses to gather honey. (by Stephen Or)

Lotus grows mostly in China, Japan, India and southeast Asian countries, with China as the world's lotus distribution centre. Except Tibet and Qinghai, it is found in nature in all of China's provinces, autonomous regions, big cities, and Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Also known as water lily, its horticultural varieties have reached over 400.

Reflection of Withered Lotuses

In winter, the sheer coldness slays ruthlessly everything with life above water, reducing the pond to a miserable sight of wilt and decline. Fighting with destiny desperately with their last breath of life, the remaining lotuses shrink and their veins crimp into deep brown ridges. Hardly able to hold themselves, the withered bare branches fold helplessly over the water. Their inverted images are reflected clearly on the pond, looking like rows of Chinese characters in a calligraphy piece, written stroke by stroke and strewn at random in a flowing style.

Lotus, however, has a much longer history than humans as it is referred to as a living plant fossil. About 100 million years ago when most of the earth's surface was covered by oceans, lakes and swamps and had an awful climate and suffered frequent calamities, there were no creatures living on the barren earth except for a few wild plants with extremely strong vitality. Among these hardy plants was the lotus. It survived tenaciously in China's Heilong River, Yellow River, Yangtze River valleys and the marshland lakes in the northern hemisphere. Sixty years ago, lotus leaf fossils dating back some 10 million years were found in Qinghai's Qadam Basin. Lotus seeds and roots were among the earliest wild fruits that hominids consumed. They were sweet and tasty, and gradually became a food resource for humans.

Lotus as City Flowers

Lotus is extremely popular in China, where it has become the city flower for Jinan and Jining in Shandong, Xiaogan and Honghu in Hubei, Xuchang

1

in Henan, Zhaoqing in Guangdong, and Macau.

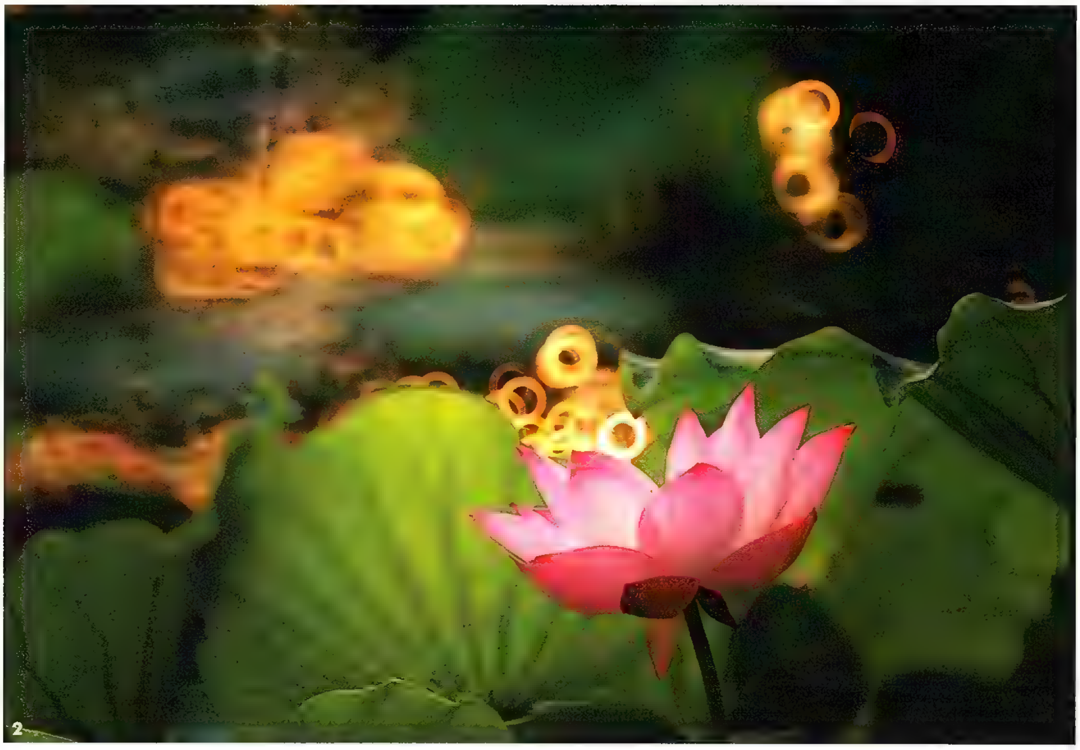
Lotus has been included into the names of innumerable scenic areas and spots. There is a Lotus Peak among many of China's famous mountains including Huangshan, Lushan, Huashan, Hengshan and Wuyi, not to mention pavilions, towers, and buildings related to it.

Lotus appears frequently in Buddhist venues. It is said that in Queen Maya's dream a Bodhisattva turned into a white elephant with six tusks and entered her right side, and that a strange white lotus suddenly grew in the palace of Kapilavastu in northern India prior to her giving birth to Sakyamuni. When he came to this world, a thousand golden rays radiated from his tongue, each turning into a white lotus with a thousand leaves. So lotus is related to the birth of Sakyamuni in Indian Buddhist scriptures and the seat he used after he became Buddha is also called the lotus seat.

Lotus first served as an item of admiration by the Chinese, rather than for any practical purpose. In 473 B.C., the King of the State of Wu built a lotus pond at Lingyan Hill in Suzhou to please a country girl from Zhejiang's Zhuji area. She was Xishi, later referred to as one of the four most beautiful women in Chinese history.

During the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.—25) when the poetic genre Yuefu became popular, many beautiful lotus-picking ballads and songs emerged, which tell stories of how people hold lotuses to enjoy themselves while singing and dancing on lotus boats. The Lotus Garden built in the Tang dynasty (618—907) in the royal garden in Chang'an (today's Xi'an) is the earliest lotus-theme garden. During the Song dynasty (960—1279), when an imperial road was built at the centre of its capital city Dongjing (today's Kaifeng in Henan) it was flanked by imperial canals where, for the first time, lotuses were planted to beautify the city. The Ming (1368—1644) and Qing (1644—1911) dynasties saw the peak of lotus planting, appreciation and painting across China. The well-known scenic resorts for lotus appreciation include Hangzhou's 'Lotus in the Breeze at Crooked Courtyard', Xuchang's 'Lotus Boat on the West Lake' in Henan, Jiangxian County's 'Breeze-Caressed Bank of the Lotus Pond' in Shanxi, and Quanzhou's 'Lotus Fragrance on the Star Lake' in Fujian.

Lotus is also an auspicious symbol as it sounds the same as 'continuous' in Chinese. It is often featured in the Ming- and Qing-dynasty wood-block New Year pictures, such as 'Sons coming in succession (with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lotus),' and 'Surplus (fish) every year,' expressing wishes for a prosperous life.

Translated by L. Yu

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Where to appreciate Lotus?

Daming Lake in Jinan, Shandong Sourced from several springs, the lake is embraced by willows on three sides and permeated with lotus fragrance everywhere, as is described in a poem by Qing dynasty poet Liu Fenghao. The misty lake is said to be so big that it fills almost half the city.

The West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang With a time-honoured history of lotus cultivation, the West Lake was praised for its lotus by famous Tang-dynasty poets Li Bai and Du Fu. 'Lotus in the Breeze at Crooked Courtyard' is one of the eight not-to-be-missed scenic resorts of the West Lake.

Tuanhu Lake in Yueyang, Hunan Located in the town of Guangxingzhou in Yueyang's Junshan District, the lake has an area of 333.3 hectares and its lotus growth is prolific.

Xuanwu Lake in Nanjing, Jiangsu Legend has it that Chen Baxian, the founding emperor of the Chen Kingdom (557—589) within the Southern dynasties and a general of the Liang dynasty (502—557), once ordered his soldiers to be fed well with duck meat and rice wrapped in the lotus leaves on the Xuanwu Lake. And it was there that he won a big battle.

Donghu Lake in Wuhan, Hubei This 30-square-km lake is located in the eastern suburbs of Wuchang. When you take a stroll by the lake, what greets your eyes is a vast stretch of lotus leaves covering most of the surface, interspersed with lotus flowers standing upright above the water.

Honghu Lake in Hubei Situated on the Hanjiang River Plain, Hubei's largest lake is well-known across the country due to the song *The Waves on the Honghu Lake*. There is a time-honoured tradition of lotus cultivation and many locals make a living from the lotus leaves and seeds.

Guihu Lake in Xindu, Sichuan Lotus was a popular plant in Xindu during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—220). Planting lotus around the lake, a Ming dynasty scholar Yang Sheng'an made an in-depth study and carried out textual research on lotus. Now a Guihu Lake Lotus Show is held from June to August every year.

The Lotus World in Sanshui, Guangdong More than 300 varieties of lotuses are planted in there, including the rare 'space lotus' cultivated in outer space, and the ancient lotus unearthed from Liaoning.

About Lotus

Latin name: Nelumbo mucifera

Family: Water Lily

This perennial aquatic plant of lotus has many varieties. All parts of the lotus, including its roots, seeds and flowers, can be eaten. Lotus roots are plump with many knots, growing in mud at the bottom of pond. Lotus flowers come in white, pink, deep red, light purple or with multiple colours. Lotus blooms from June to September, in full blossom in the morning, and closing in the evening. It bears fruit from September to October.

4

1. Enjoying the scenes in the Lotus World at Sanshui, Guangdong. (by Chan Yat Nin)

2. Lotus has always been a favourite subject for photographers. (by Adam Wong)

3. Lotus on the water at Beijing's Summer Palace has its special charm. (by Adam Wong)

4. Twin lotus flowers on one stalk. (by Adam Wong)

Sunflower — In Chase of the Sun

Article Chan Yat Nin

With its big circular head, bright colour and wide presence, the sunflower is a flower that has received much attention around the world. This common crop has never been a favourite of the Chinese literati or been invited into their studios, yet it is no doubt the dazzling highlight of many a field.

This lovely flower, with its brilliant colour, sunny disposition, great height and cheerful face, as well as its sheer magnitude covering the mountains and plains like a 'troupe of the sun,' is always inspiring.

Experiencing Van Gogh's Passion

I have been a guide for several photographers' groups. Whenever we came to large fields of sunflowers, my group would always become so excited that they seemed to be naive children once again. Once they ventured into the sunflower world, I knew I would not get them to move to the next destination as planned.

Such experiences always reminds me of Vincent Van Gogh. This talented painter, unappreciated before his death, painted life-like sunflowers with superb skill. Obviously his passionate touches were stimulated by the brightness of sunflowers. Surrounded by a sea of sunflowers, I could also experience Van Gogh's passion; and looking at the flower veins beating with the pulse of life, I even had the impulse to try my hand at painting this flower. Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* was auctioned for over US$100 million, surpassing any of his other paintings. Sigh! How could Chinese literati and painters not have any passion for sunflowers?

Golden Army of the Sun

Among Chinese literati, the one most caught up with sunflower passion must be martial arts novelist Louis Cha. The secret martial arts book for which *kungfu* masters fought to the death is called the

Sunflower Bible. The existence of the *Sunflower Bible* may be questionable, but I do believe that sunflowers are really intuitive. They always face the sun, following its direction, and all of them move simultaneously. Isn't that interesting?

The feeling of personification we get from the sunflowers also illustrates that they are charged with spiritual significance. The two major oil-bearing resources — sunflowers and rape flowers — both have bright yellow flowers. Cultivated extensively, they always form large scale, magnificent landscapes in the fields. Tall and lofty, rows of well-arranged sunflowers seem to present formations of a powerful army with well-armoured soldiers. I think this is a masterpiece created by farmers who are the commander of this army of the sun. The farmers, however, do not care about the aesthetic value of the sunflowers; what they are after are the seeds that can be turned into oil and snacks.

Sunflower seed oil is seldom used for cooking by southerners. Yet the mere sight of the flowers would brighten the eyes and invigorate the body as if well-nourished by the sunlight. I believe that this great army of the sun must have held a great position in the eyes of all who enjoy travelling by its fields.

Translated by L. Yu

About Sunflowers

The sunflower is a herbaceous plant that is a relative of okra, high mallow, hollyhock, and Chinese fan palm.

Categorized in the composite family, this annual herb can grown as high as 3.5 metres, its flowers blooming between August and November.

Sunflower seeds contain a high percentage of quality oil, which is regarded as one of the healthiest cooking oils. As a cash crop, the sunflower is also aesthetically valuable.

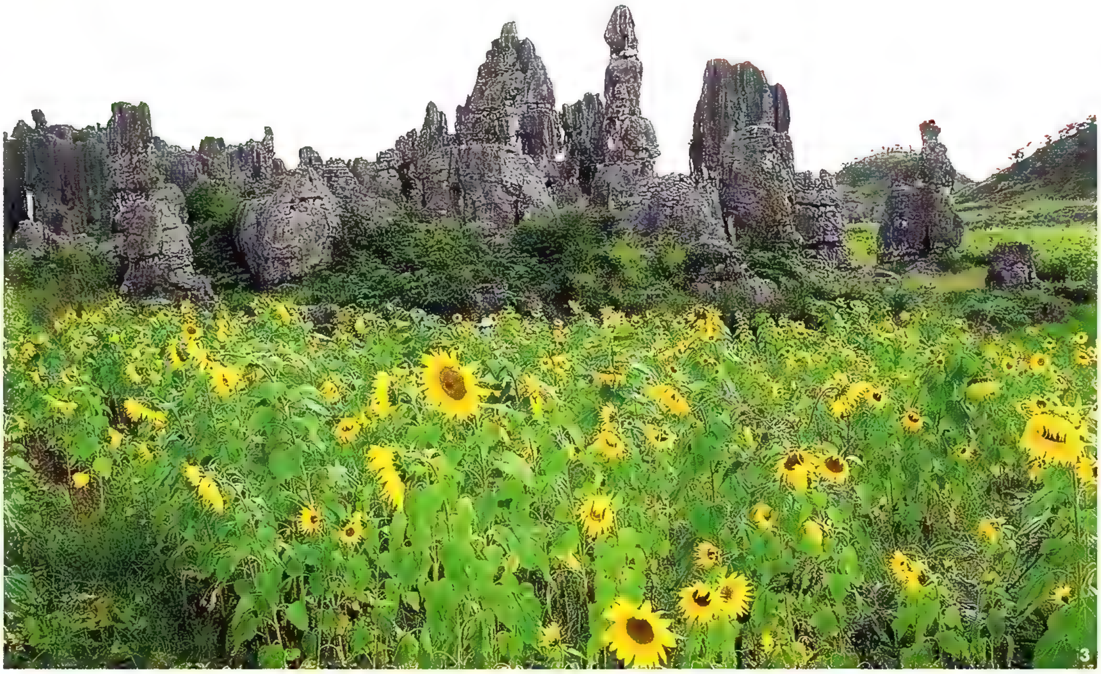
Sunflowers are commonly found on the farmland in north and northwest China, where they often provide a pleasant surprise for travellers.

Although sunflowers are not usually planted as a cash crop in Guangdong, there is a Garden of a Million Sunflowers for tourists in Panyu District, Guangzhou. Over a million sunflowers there come in a variety of colours — yellow, red and purple — and they are planted so that their blooming periods overlap.

1. Too beautiful to leave. (by Chan Yat Nin)

2. Sunflowers are always attracted to the sun. (by Adam Wong)

3. Sunflowers in Yunnan's Stone Forest scenic spot. (Li Zhixiong)



Delicate Peach Blossoms

Article • Chan Yat Nin

1. The peach blossom is a good luck symbol, also said to bring love. (by Guo Jianshe)

2. Peach blossoms light up the sky. (by Chan Yat Nin)

3. Peach blossoms in the countryside of Hunan, Anhui, Zhejiang – heralding spring's return. (by Wang Miao)

The pretty, bright peach blossom is a symbol of spring, and in China, it's also been imbued with meanings of luck and love. During festivals, households hang peach wood charms to ward off evil spirits, while peach blossoms are placed inside the house to bring luck, demonstrating the dual functions of the peach.

In Hong Kong, peach blossoms are a new year essential to add a splash of colour to homes. They are also believed to be good for matters of the heart, and in fact, luck in love is known as 'peach luck'. But you don't have to embrace peach blossoms at Chinese New Year as the Cantonese do; I prefer, for example, to encounter 'peach luck' in the countryside.

Heaven On Earth — Peach Blossom Spring

Ever since Tao Yuanming (365—427), the great poet from the Jin dynasty, described the 'Peach Blossom Garden' — an idyllic utopia for humans - the peach has been synonymous with pleasant, picturesque places with ideal climates where friendly people live and enjoy life. Little did Tao Yuanming know that centuries later, his poetic words would become a utopia blueprint for modern Chinese people.

In this day and age, the best known 'Peach-blossom spring' has to be that in Taoyuan county of

Hunan province. About 200 km to the west of Changsha, or along the Yuanshui River to the eastern part of the Wuling mountain ranges, there is a place about seven kilometres wide and nine kilometres long that's been recognized as the authentic 'Peach-blossom spring'. Here you'll find peach tree lined streams, perfectly reflecting the masses of flowers — as if they were pink clouds. Every year when 28 March comes around — the date of the peach festival — it's like the poem says: 'the face and the peach blossom both shine bright and pink'.

I've been to another place recognized as where Tao Yuanming's descendants dwelled — an ancient village in Xiaqin County at Huangshan (Yellow Mountain). Here the peach trees are not as concentrated, but the bright pink petals peeking out of weathered Chinese walls is an even more arresting sight.

The best place to appreciate the flowers is not at home but the countryside where they bloom with more vibrancy. To start with, I've been to the orchards of Tai Po Lam Tsuen village in Hong Kong's New Territories right before Chinese New year, a time when the farmers were busy with the most important occasion on their annual sales calendar. It was also when the peach blossoms were about to, or starting to, bloom and the picture of thousands of peach trees vying to flower is much more lively than anything in pots or vases. The peach orchards are even bigger in places like Nanhai and Shunde. For example, the Nanguo peach orchard in Songgang Town of Nanhai is a well-known peach centre.

Come autumn, the orchards are filled with the delicious aroma of ripe peaches — few can resist such tempting scents!

Translated by Cheng Lei

Where to appreciate peach blossoms?

Shenzhou peaches of Hebei Province are also named 'king peaches', weighing an estimated 250 grams each —king size indeed. In autumn, the heavy, juicy fruits weigh down entire branches, enough to tempt anyone who walks by.

Lingxi Village in Mancheng County of Hebei Province is known as the 'home of snow peaches'. These peach trees flower at the same time as other types of peach trees, but the fruit doesn't ripen until snow comes in winter, hence the name.

Another top contender for the best northern peach title is 'Feicheng peach' of Shandong Province's Feicheng. The fruits are huge and smell delicious, bursting with tender flesh and sweet juice.

Of the southern species, the big names are 'red robe peaches' from Dawu and Yingxian counties in Hubei province, honey peaches from Jiangsu Province's city of Wuxi; both varieties are known for being large, deep in colour, fragrant and juicy.

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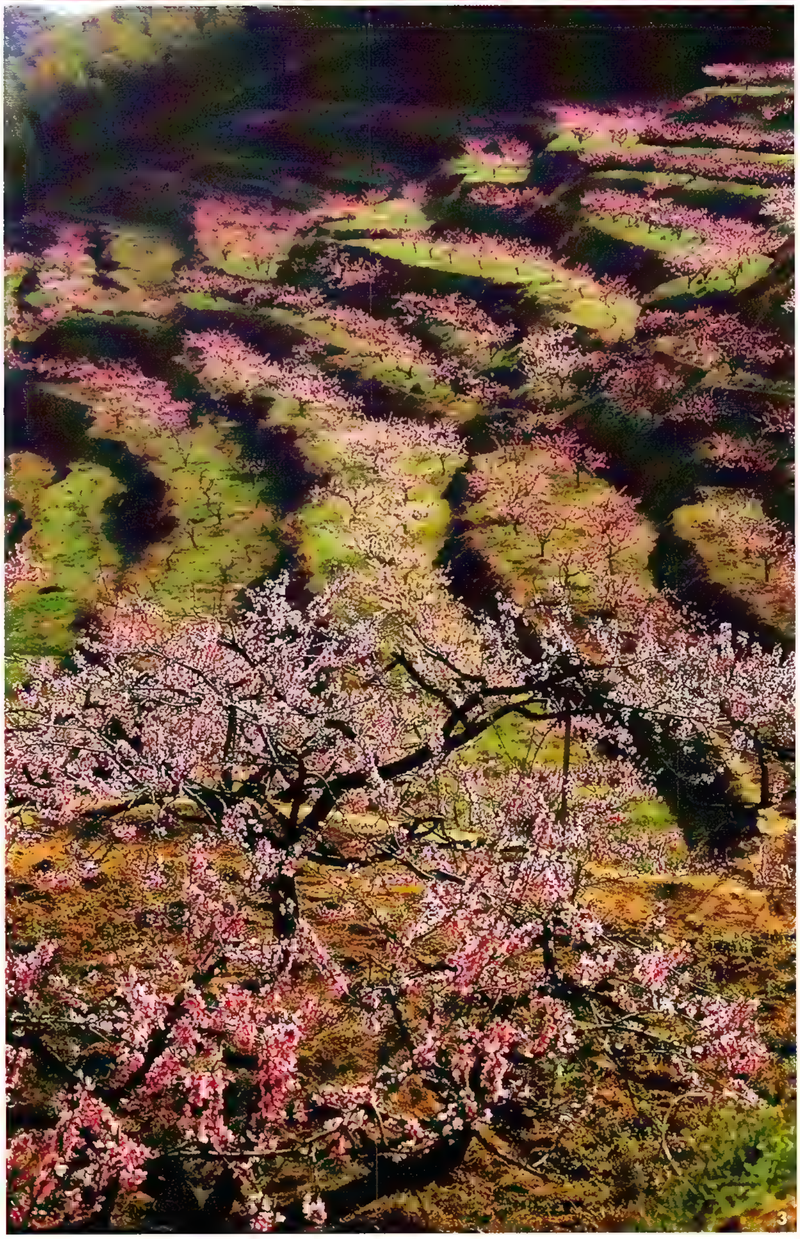
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Ode to Azalea

Article: Huang Yanhong

Legend has it that in spring and summer, the cuckoo bird (which shares its name with the azaleas flower in Chinese) cries all night, so hard and so long that it coughs up blood, which turns the flowers into red azaleas. Thinking of azaleas in China therefore means thinking of this heartbreaking story.

One spring, when we were climbing Luoji Mountain in West China's Sichuan Province, the clouds and fog kept our visibility low most of the time. Thankfully we saw azaleas all along the way, their vibrant beauty easing our fatigue. As we made our way through virgin forests, dense with entwining vines, and waves of dampness wafted toward us, our constant companion was the azaleas — a sea of red spreading as far as the eye could see.

Blood into Flowers

Even as we were enjoying the alpine hiking, I was reminded of the 'cuckoo bird crying blood' story, which is described in the Tang dynasty poem 'The azalea and the cuckoo bird'. They are linked inextricably in sadness and beauty — what looks like 'blood in the mouth, becomes flowers on the branches'. In spring and summer, the cuckoo bird's short sharp cries last day and night, and at the same time, the azaleas are in full bloom. Hence, the poignant connection: it's the blood from the cuckoo bird's throat that colours the masses of azaleas. I guess our ancestors were not so simple as to believe that the cuckoo bird's relentless cries caused its mouth to bleed but this story is a sentimentally romantic one that has been passed down over time.

Flowering Beauty

In some parts of China, azaleas are called 'yingshan hong', meaning, lighting up the mountain in red; the Koreans call it 'jin dalai'; while the Yi people and Tibetans have named it 'suoma flower' and 'gesang flower' respectively, both meaning 'beautiful flowers'.

China has the most azaleas in the world. Over 500 varieties can be found throughout China with the exception of Xinjiang and Ningxia. Yunnan's varieties of azaleas make up half of the national total. The azalea is one of China's top 10 flowers.

The seeds of the earliest azaleas were carried by the wind from the Himalayas about 5,000 years ago an international odyssey. Some seeds drifted to northeast Asia, making the Chinese mainland its biggest home; some yellow azaleas spread to Australia via India and Malaysia. The unluckiest of the bunch tried to make their home in Europe, but because of the Ice Age, only a few varieties survived there.

What's unexpected about azalea is that such beautiful flowers are completely poisonous, especially the petals and the leaves. Accidental ingestion could induce nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, diarrhoea, and even coma. On the other hand, that's exactly what makes azaleas a rich source of medicine. The flowers, leaves and roots can all be used to regulate menstruation, ease coughs, cool fever, cure rheumatism, stop itching, relieve pain...

Translated by Cheng Lei

1. Alpine azaleas at the juncture of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet, with snow-capped mountains as a background (by Yu Zhixin)

2. Azaleas in the water town of Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province. (by Xie Guanghui)

3. Yellow azaleas. (by Chen Keqin)

2

About Azaleas

Latin name: *Rhododendron simsii*

English name: Indian Azalea

Azaleas come in many varieties, broadly split into four types according to flowering season and source. Azaleas grow naturally in cold, temperate and sub-tropical climates, mostly on hills, mountainous pastures, forest edges, stone walls and marshes. The alpine azaleas have extensive root systems and are excellent in preventing soil erosion.

Where to appreciate azaleas?

Guizhou Baili azaleas Dafang County of the Bijie region in northwest Guizhou Province is home to China's largest wild azaleas forest. An azalea festival is held every year in March-April.

Cangshan Mountain, Dali, Yunnan Province This areas is the most handy for observing wild azaleas.

Xichang Luoji Mountain, Sichuan Province This mountain has large fields of azaleas within the virgin forests.

Southeastern and eastern parts of Tibet Located at an altitude of 3,000 metres here, you'll find some unique azalea varieties: snow, purple-black, spotted, coarse and scaly azaleas.

Dandong, Liaoning Province After some 60 years of cultivation, the city is home to more than 240 types of azaleas.

Lushan Botanical Gardens, Jiangxi Province There is an International friendship azaleas garden here with more than 300 types of azaleas.

Taipei, Taiwan: Voted as the city flower, azaleas can be found all around the city and in the hills nearby. It's said that azaleas can reduce air pollution as well as act as a noise barrier.

3

Peony —

The King of Chinese Flowers

Article · Shi Baoxiu

The peony is considered royalty in China's flower kingdom, long hailed as 'beautiful and fragrant beyond comparison', and even personified as a floral elite that stoops its regal head for no one.

The peony originated in Northwest China, mostly growing in the wild hills of Qinling and Shanbei (northern Shaanxi Province). Even now, there is one variety in a wild peony garden in the valleys west of Yan'an that has likely spawned all of today's peonies. The Chinese first started cultivating peonies in the Northern and Southern dynasties. By the Tang dynasty, when the country's wealth and power was at a peak, the national borders were expanding and people enjoyed comfortable lives. The peony, a symbol of richness, became a popular flower throughout Chang'an (the capital city). In the time of the Northern Song dynasty, Luoyang became the country's premier place for growing peonies, so it became known as the Luoyang flower.

One can't mention Luoyang peony without making reference to the most powerful woman in Chinese history — Wu Zetian, an empress who ruled with a tougher fist than all male emperors. Legend has it that all the power went to Wu Zetian's head and she thought she could even make the impossible happen! She ordered that every flower must bloom in the depths of winter. While all other flowers cowered under the Empress's tyranny and opened on cue, only the peony dared defy the order and showed but a few green sprouts. In Wu Zetian's fury, she demoted the peony fairy from Chang'an (the capital) to Luoyang, which led to a grand opportunity for the peony to flourish in Luoyang — and become China's king of flowers.

Peonies bloom every April and May, attracting flower fans from around the globe. The flowers are not only pretty to look at, the petals can be used to make wine, the roots can be processed into 'danpi' — a rare ingredient in Chinese medicine used as an antibiotic to diminish inflammation, a tranquillizer, an analgesic, and to stop coughing of blood.

Translated by Cheng Lei

About the Peony

Peony, as with the herbaceous peony, part of the *Ranunculaceae* family, is a perennial deciduous shrub. The peony is regarded as the king of flowers in traditional Chinese culture. Usually 1 ~ 2 metres tall, old plants could be as tall as three metres. It has opposite, odd-pinnate leaves, which are alternately produced along the stems and divided into three lobes, with each lobe being further divided. The flowers can have odd or even numbers of petals, usually being 15 ~ 30 cm in diameter. Originating in China, the peony prefers a cool to hot climate, and is more suited to arid rather than moist conditions, particularly areas with an annual average humidity level of around 45 per cent. They thrive in sunny positions, although a little shade is acceptable. Peonies take to loose, fertile, well-irrigated neutral or sandy soil, and not suited to sticky heavy soil or low temperatures.

Three Grand Peony Fair in China

Luoyang: This is the famed ancient capital city that's renowned for its peonies. Luoyang peonies come in a rainbow of colours and a huge number of varieties, so much so that it's spawned the saying 'Luoyang peonies are unrivalled in the world'. You'll find peonies wherever you go in Luoyang — throughout the streets, parks, in factories, government buildings, schools and hotels.

Main sights include Wangcheng park, Xiyuan park, Guose peony garden, Baima Temple, Baiyuan.

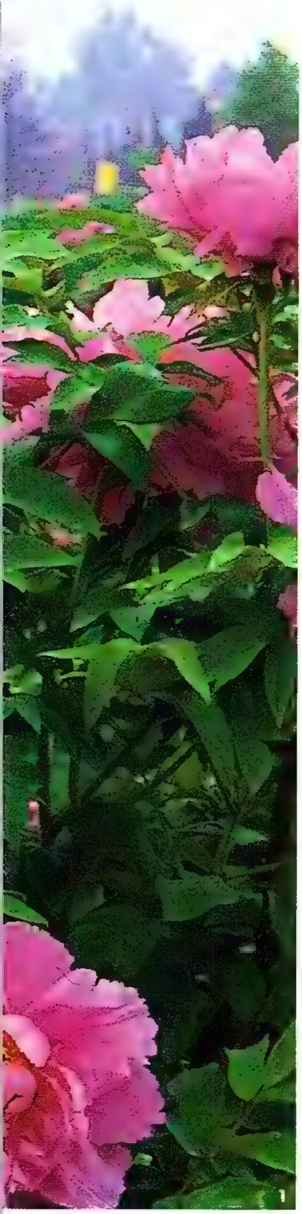
Heze: At the southern bank of the Yellow River's lower reaches, southwest of Shandong province, near Liangshan, the mountain of rebellion.

The main peony-viewing spots are: Caozhou peony park, Gujin park, Baihua park. There is also a peony town in Heze and they grow profusely, including those used for medicine, in the fields of Zhaolou, Liji, Helou, Hongmiao and Wanglizhuang.

Heze's peonies are grown in fields and now number over 2.6 million of 400 varieties, covering an area of over 5,000 mu, or more than 333 hectares. The annual Heze Peony Festival has been held for a number of years.

Pengzhou: Situated in the northwest of Chengdu in Sichuan Province, Pengzhou has two peony parks. One is the city's Tianpeng Peony Park, which has over 10 *mu* (just under a hectare) covered with more than 40 local varieties and some from Luoyang and Heze. The other one is the Danjing Mountain's peony grounds — about 16 km out of the city. Here the flowers bloom a little later than in Pengzhou downtown.

Xi'an: In the Xinqinggong park, built on the former site of the Tang dynasty Xingqing palace, there is a Chenxiang Pavilion in the garden where the Emperor Ming of Tang dynasty emperor and his famous concubine Yang Guifei, poet great Li Bai and court official Gao Lishi had once drank wine, written poetry, sang and danced. Around this rebuilt pavilion there are about 300 rare varieties of peonies. The flowers here bloom later than in Luoyang, usually in early May.



1. The Peony Garden in Heze, Shandong Province. (by Yi Fu)

2. The peony fairy statue in Wangcheng Park, Luoyang, Henan Province. (by Wang Yuejin)

3. Peony means wealth in Chinese traditions. (by Wang Yuejin)

The Red Hero

Article • Chan Yat Nin

1

2

Every year in March, the bright red flowers of the cotton tree fill the branches in a bold display of their weight and vitality. Known as 'pan zhi hua' or 'hero tree' in China, these trees are most familiar to people living in the south of the country.

The cotton tree (Bombax ceiba) has many names in China: 'hongmian' (red cotton), 'panzhihua' (branch-climbing flower), 'jibei' (lucky shell), 'fenghuo' (battle flames), and 'qiongzhi' (jade stick). 'Fenghuo' was the name bestowed by Zhao Tuo — the founder of the Nan Yue (Southern Yue) Kingdom during the Warring States period (475—221 B.C.), so it has a certain general-like gallantry. For its proud stance and crimson flowers, it also enjoys the monikers 'Shi Zhang Shanhu' (30-metre long corals) and 'hero tree', among others. The cotton tree is part of the *Dicotyledoneae Bombacaceae* family and is widely found in the Lingnan region (areas south of the Five Ridges covering Guangdong Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autuonomous Region). In China, it originated in Hainan Island but spread across the low altitude areas of Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan.

In Hong Kong, whether in the city or the suburbs, you're never far from the regal stature of the cotton tree. Especially in March, when the entire city lights up with the vivid colours of various flowers in bloom, the most eye-catching is always the cotton tree flower. Look at it — tall and straight trunks devoid of leaves, swathed in masses of fire-engine red flowers — a bold statement in crimson.

Cotton tree flowers are both useful and beautiful. The flowers and the bark are both be used in Chinese medicine. The flowers can reduce fever and ease dampness, and are included in the Ng Fa Cha (five flowers tea) that the Cantonese love to drink in summer. As the tree is also called wood cotton, it's not surprising that the seed is covered with a cotton-like fluff; in summer when the husk splits open, the cotton fluff drifts about like snow! The cotton is indeed used in textiles, for example, to make quilts and pillows.

Where to appreciate cotton trees?

On the island of Hainan, cotton trees are everywhere; it's quite common to see pretty cotton trees in Guangdong and Guangxi as well. The city of Guangzhou has even adopted it as the 'city flower', leaving visitors with unforgettable memories should they arrive when the flowers are blooming. The best sights are at the Zhongshan memorial hall and around Yuexiu Mountain. It is also the flower emblem of Kaohsiung City in Taiwan.

For good photos, it's best to choose trees frequented by birds, and shoot the flowers from a level angle, getting the birds into your shot as well.

Spring in the Pear Orchard

Article: Chan Yat Nin

Amid the flower extravaganza of spring, the pear blossom is one of the most visible players. But in terms of status, it doesn't get the same amount of attention as pear blossoms, notwithstanding the popularity of the crunchy, sweet pear fruit.

The pear blossom is part of the *Rosaceae* family, a deciduous tree that is usually 10 metres in height and has white five-petal flowers and sweet juicy fruits. There are many varieties of the pears. Some trees live as long as several hundred years, presenting a very interesting contrast of old tree and new flowers.

Pears have been cultivated in China as long as 3,000 years ago. The best known pear country is in the north, where blossoms appear in April. At this time of the year, the pear orchards are transformed into snowy wonderlands of endless white flowers.

Perhaps the pear was seen as a wild flower and therefore deemed not important enough to catch the attention of writers and artists. The pear's claim to fame stems from Li Longji, or Emperor Xuanzong of Tang dynasty (618—907), who chose 300 musicians to study at the pear garden. From then on, the name 'pear garden' came to represent the theatre, with its performers being called 'sons of the pear garden'.

Translated by Cheng Lei

1. Cotton tree flowers are plump and heavy enough to withstand a bird's weight. (by Chan Yat Nin)

2. March is a great time to photograph cotton trees. (by Adam Wong)

3. Greater Jinchuan River of western Sichuan is home to the snow pear. The flowers bloom at the end of March or beginning of April. (by Liu Qiankun)

4. Pear blossoms may not have the same status of other showy flowers but when in bloom they're truly stunning. (by Adam Wong)

Where to appreciate pear blossoms?

Hebei is a major pear-producing province. Zhaoxian County (Zhaozhou in ancient times) is home to the famous snow pears, so named not only because of the snowy white flowers, but because of the immaculate white flesh of the fruit. Changli's honey pears are beautiful to look at, with a golden colour on the outside, white flesh and crunchy sweet texture.

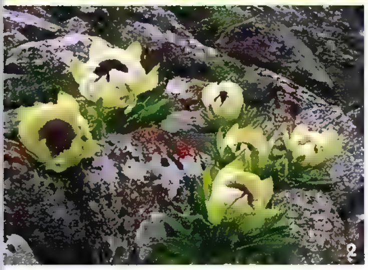
The central-southern plains and northern hills of Hebei Province are well-known producers of Yali (duck pears), possibly the best known type of pears. It is so named because the fruit is a little lopsided like a duck bill. They are also sometimes called 'Tianjin Yali' since they are exported from the nearest port, Tianjin. However, to catch sight of the pear blossoms, you'd be making a mistake if you went to Tianjin instead of Hebei.

Xinjiang is another famous pear-producing region, where pears are widely grown on both the south and north parts of the Tianshan ranges. Places like Ku'erle in southern Xinjiang, Awati, Kashi, Moyu, Shache, Yecheng and Shanshan are all important areas of pear production. It is usually the desert oases where pears grow well and these give rise to breathtakingly beautiful sights when blossoms abound.

The Noble Snow Lotus

Article / Chan Yat Nin

Growing in harsh remote habitats on snowy peaks, Saussurea, or snow lotus, exhibits a pure noble and dauntless character. The Kazak nomads on Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang like to tie the flower on top of their yurts as a symbol of luck and prosperity. They also consider snow lotus a symbol of pure love and harvest it as a gift for lovers.



1. Snow lotus under Tianshan Peak. (by Li Xueliang)

2. Snow lotus grows out of a rock crevice. (by Sun Jiabin)

3. Plum blossoms brace the snow and cold. (by Xie Guanghui)

Many years ago, on my visit to Xinjiang, I knew I had to go to Tianshan Mountains. I found that snow lotus was not as difficult to acquire as the treasure of Indiana Jones. It grows at altitudes of 2,800 to 4,000 metres below the snow line. Its favourite habitats are cliffs, rock crevices, scree slopes and moist sandy land. Normally it blossoms in July and August. The flower sprouts from a stem about one foot tall. Ten or more flowering bracts, translucent jade-white or light green circle the purple stem. The floret forms in a dense hemispherical head of small capitula, resembling a lotus flower — hence the name 'snow lotus'. It emanates a unique fragrance.

Snow lotus is a perennial herbaceous plant of the *Compositae* family. In China it grows extensively on Tianshan Mountains, and also on the Altay Mountains, Kunlun Mountains, Pamirs and snow lands of Tibet and Yunnan Province. It includes *Saussurea involucrata* (found on Tianshan Mountains) *Saussurea laniceps*, *Saussurea medusa* and other species.

It would certainly be a privilege to see a snow lotus sitting elegantly amid the snow and ice.

Though snow lotus is often dramatized in novels, its medicinal functions are undeniable. In the famous Qing (1644—1911) medical classic *A Supplement to the Compendium of Materia Medica*, it states that 'for all varieties of snow lotus, the one produced on the peaks of Tianshan is the best'. Its medicinal properties include the ability to 'clear away heat, unblock of the main and collateral channels, promote blood circulation, disperse wind and eliminate dampness.' A modern pharmacological analysis of snow lotus shows that it contains such substances as a volatile oil, alkaloid, flavonoid, phenol and tannins. It is an effective treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, menstrual disorders and abdominal pain due to cold deficient womb.

Where to appreciate snow lotus?

Snow lotus grows chiefly on sunny scree slopes at the edge of the snow line. On a trip to Tianchi (Heavenly Lake) and Bogda Peak, you can hire a horse with a Kazak guide and ride to the snow line. If you are lucky, you can find snow lotus. However, frequent human intrusions and unrestricted harvesting has curbed its growth in common tourist spots, and it now grows mainly in barely accessible locations.

Plum Flowers in Full Bloom

Article • Chan Yat Nin

The plum flower enjoys an exalted status — for its beauty and its cultural symbolism — in China. The plum, pine and bamboo are called 'Three Friends in Winter,' while the plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum are dubbed 'The Four Gentlemen'.

Though not officially recognized, the plum is widely accepted by the public as the national flower of China.

The plum tree originated in China around 3,000 years ago. Over the millennia, it was cultivated into two major genera, the fruit plum and flower plum. Once the fruit plum's unipetalous flowers die off, a tasty fruit makes its appearance. The flower plum, with its multiple layers of petals, has a much higher status in Chinese culture. Cluster upon cluster of plum flowers bloom in the depths of winter, presenting a gorgeous scene. The flower plum rarely bears fruit — rather, it is grown to evoke emotion and appreciation.

In China's groves of plum trees, the red plum blossoms dominate the area and create an awesome spectacle. Visitors flock to the massive plum gardens to enjoy them in different ways. Some people simply appreciate the massive expansion and intoxicating fragrance. Others appreciate the whole scene on a higher, spiritual level, appreciating not only the clusters of flowers but also the intermingling of the various shapes and formations of the branches.

Following principles such as 'sparse better than dense, older better than younger, thin better than thick, and buds better than blooms' help in the appreciation of the plum trees. It is believed that a sparseness of flowers gives a detached look and leaves room for the imagination; that thin branches outline a terse, tidy framework; that old plants show off their vigour and weathering capability; and that a bud is reserved rather than outspoken, indicating a flourishing stage would come rather than an end. Learning to appreciate the plum flowers and trees in this more spiritual way trains a person to later appreciate their shapes and symbolism in the traditional Chinese paintings.

Translated by Zhang Boli

Where to appreciate plum blossom?

China has places in which to appreciate plum blossoms. Cities that honour the plum as their 'city flower' are best, such as Wuhan in Hubei Province and Nanjing in Jiangsu Province. The blossoms appear in these two cities in early to mid March.

Western Hubei and eastern Sichuan are believed to be the place of origin of the plum. In terms of varieties, Wuhan ranks number one in the country. The 'Plum Corridor' in Sun Yat-sen Park, Caomei (Plum Viewing) Hill, and the plum hill and garden at East Lake are all fantastic places in Wuhan to appreciate plum.

The famous Plum Hill, on the south bank of the Yuhe Bridge at Xiaoling (Filial Piety Mausoleum) in the eastern suburb of Nanjing, Zhejiang Province, boasts a myriad of plum trees of different varieties. The Plum Flower Festival, held when the flowers are blossoming, attracts numerous visitors, photographers and cinematographers, including many from Hong Kong.

In Jiangsu Province, some of the greatest retreats to appreciate the plum flowers are the Flagrant Snow Sea (*Xiang Xue Hai*) on Dengwei Hill of Suzhou, Plum Garden of Wuxi, and West Hill of Taihu Lake; in Zhejiang Province, go to the Ling Peak of West Lake of Hangzhou and Cao Hill of Yuhang; in Shanghai, Dianshan Lake is the best location. Nearer to Hong Kong, you can head for the Plum Hill between Nanxiong County, Guangdong Province and Dayu County.

Cherry Blossoms

Article • Xie Guanghui

After the harsh winter, clusters of snow-white cherry blossoms, or *sakura* in Japanese, bloom on each and every branch. In such a pure, reserved message, the flowers herald spring.

Cherry blossoms originated in Japan. It is said that 1,500 years ago, a beautiful girl set off from Okinawa, passed by Kyushu, Kansai and Kanto, and eventually arrived at Hokkaido. She spread petals of cherry blossom, a symbol of hope and love, all over the places on her way. From that time on, cherry blossom comes into full bloom each year from the north to the south of the country. Japan is renowned as a 'Country of Cherry Blossoms.'

The cherry blossom is a symbol of happiness, and yet its beauty is short-lived. It's important to seize the moment of seasonal blooming or you will have to wait another year. Some Japanese will sit below a tree of luxuriant flowers and drink sake. Others dare to wait till one or two petals fall into the wine cup and then gulp the cup of wine with the petals in one go. It is an intoxicating moment.

The petal and leaf of a cherry blossom are rich in vitamins A, B and E. Eating them helps the facial skin retain its fresh appearance. They also are efficient in strengthening the mucous membranes and stimulating metabolism. Water with salted cherry blossom petals can relieve a hangover. It is said that the leaf and stem can cure malignant tumours and are an antidote to the poisonous pufferfish, or fugu as it is better known in Japanese, a deadly delicacy.

Where to appreciate cherry blossoms?

Apart from Japan, one can appreciate cherry blossoms in some cities in China. Yuyuantan Park in Beijing, Sun Yat-sen Park in Qingdao, Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum and Xuwu Lake Park in Nanjing, Shangfang Mountain in Suzhou, Yuantou Zhufeng Scenic Spot of Tai Lake, Wuxi, Taiziwan Park of Hangzhou, Moshan Cherry Blossom Park of East Lake, Wuhan, Yuantong Hill of Kunming, and Mt Alishan of Taiwan are all good places to appreciate these blossoms.

Chrysanthemum

Article • Xie Guanghui

Chrysanthemum is one of the 10 most famous flowers of China. It is symbolic of respectability as well as the simple, detached life of a recluse.

Many poems have been dedicated to the chrysanthemum over time. The most famous piece was *Drinking Wine* by Tao Qian (365—427) in the Jin dynasty: From the eastern hedge, I pluck chrysanthemum flowers / And idly look towards the southern hills. The simple, unadorned quality of the chrysanthemum appropriately represents the inclination and temperament of a recluse — indifferent to fame and wealth, retreating to hold onto a patch of farm land, and emotionally attached to mountains and waters.

According to the modern analyses, *Chrysanthemum morifolium* contains such substances as chrysanthemin, amino acids and vitamins and is efficient in eliminating inner heat, suppressing cough, nourishing the kidney, strengthening the stomach, moistening the throat, generating saliva, and reducing fat in the blood.

Place of Origin

Chrysanthemum morifolium's common name, 'Hang Bai Ju' (Hangzhou White Chrysanthemum) will easily confuse people about its place of origin. In fact, Tongxiang, in the north of Zhejiang Province, is where it originated. In earlier times, when transportation was difficult due to the many rivers and lakes, little information on this flower was disseminated outside the area. The shrewd tea dealers of Anhui disguised Tongxiang's white chrysanthemum, which they shipped to distant places, as 'Hang Bai Ju'. Their intentional misnomer stuck in peoples' minds and thereby, they were able to keep their exclusive dealership.

The last 10 days of October each year are when the chrysanthemums bloom. Following the harvesting of autumn silk cocoons, the farmers go on to harvest the chrysanthemum in five rounds. The first round is done when the flower is not fully blooming — the 'budding chrysanthemum' — while the second is called the 'first chrysanthemum.' The flowers harvested from the first two rounds yield the best quality, and when dried and processed, they are graded as 'Special Class.' Those harvested later are mostly labelled 'Class I' or 'Class II.'

Chrysanthemum morifolium came originally from the wild yellow chrysanthemum. With bud mutation and much manual planting, transplanting and hybridisation, the wild chrysanthemum was developed into the white and yellow species (white chrysanthemum is better). Those primitive wild chrysanthemums can still be seen everywhere in Tongxiang.

At the end of the 17th century, Dutch merchants brought the chrysanthemum home. At the beginning of the 18th century, it was introduced into France. In the mid 19th century, it spread to North America, and later on, could be found all over the world.

Translated by Zhang Bali

1. Although they flourish luxuriantly, the cherry blossoms last only a short period. (by Chan Yat Nin)

2. One can appreciate cherry blossoms in a number of places in China. (by Chan Yat Nin)

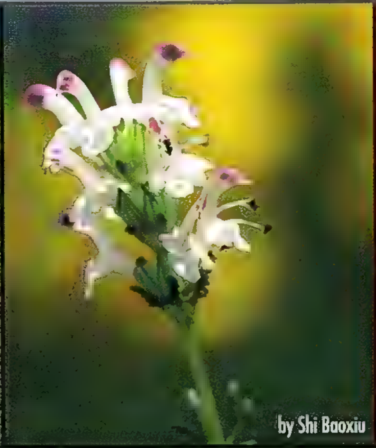
3. The chrysanthemum symbolises the simple detached life of a recluse. (by Chan Yat Nin)

4. Tongxiang in north Zhejiang Province is where *Chrysanthemum morifolium* originated. (by Guo Jianshe)

Where to appreciate chrysanthemums?

China is the homeland of the chrysanthemum. The flower was recorded in the ancient books as early as 2,500 years ago. Today China has over 3,000 species of chrysanthemum in yellow, white, red, purple and green colours. In autumn each year, many cities and towns in China hold chrysanthemum exhibitions. The most famous of these, which mostly display potted plants, include a show in Zhuozhenyuan Garden of Suzhou, an exhibition in Qianwang Shrine of Hangzhou, a fair in Longting Park of Kaifeng, and a species exhibition in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province. In contrast, Puyuan Town, Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province presents a unique field of chrysanthemums exhibition. At the beginning of November, an endless expanse of fields becomes a sea of blooming chrysanthemums near National Highway 320 in Puyuan Town. In a way it resembles a spectacular spring snowfall scene. In the grand chrysanthemum shows held locally, visitors can appreciate the unique Chrysanthemum Tea style, chrysanthemum ikebana (flower arrangement), chrysanthemum maze, and folk song and dance performances.

by Pu Qingxue


by Shi Baoxiu

by Chan Yat Nin

by Lin Jinghua

by Shi Baoxiu

Wild About
Wild Flowers

by Stephen Or

by Adam Wong

The wild summer flowers found in Xinjiang, Qinghai, western Sichuan, Tibet and Inner Mongolia are enough to take your breath away...

Article • Shi Baoxiu

by Shi Baoxiu

by Pu Qingxue

by Shi Baoxiu

by Shi Baoxiu

by Adam Wong

by Shi Baoxiu

I was once in Ili in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the area was awash with flowers. It's a sight I will never forget. On the southern shore of Sayram Lake, the blue lake water lapped against a bank covered in golden-petalled flowers. This gentle slope rose to meet a dense green forest. In the grasslands, oxen, sheep and horses grazed lazily, seemingly oblivious to the wondrous colours all around them.

Bracelets and Garlands

In fact, the wildstock didn't limit their attention just to grass — even the brilliant yellow petals became a snack for them. Tourists seemed quite stupefied by the amazing sight, and the women and girls in our party gave whoops of delight and immediately set out to pick flowers for bracelets and garlands. The men took the opportunity to use the flowers as an impromptu bed, luxuriating in their softness and perfume. On the western bank, a field of red poppies stretched out towards the horizon. But unlike the poppies grown for heroin, these wild poppies were smaller, shorter and much less potent.

Sneezing Among the Lavender

Leaving Sayram Lake, we passed through the county capital of Yi Ning to reach the banks of the Ili River. Here too, the scenery was overflowing with flowers. If you arrive in early April you will be greeted by a patchwork of wild pear, cherry, apple and apricot trees in full blossom. Like a crown atop the grass plains, the fruit trees contrast with the streaming branches of the willow trees and the fresh greenness of the wild grass to create an intoxicating sight.

In June, lavender appears and quickly dominates the landscape with a ribbon of purple, causing havoc for those with sinus problems and sneezing fits even for those without.

A Wild Flower Kingdom in the Sky

Travelling on from the Ili River, we soon came to one of her tributaries, the Kunes River. We had arrived in another world full of flowers, the Nalati plain, nicknamed 'Garden in the Sky'. Here, the number and variety of wild flowers was vast, with flowers in every shape, colour, size and fragrance imaginable. I once spent hours photographing hundreds of flowers here, all of them with beautiful shapes and colours, and all of them unknown to me. There are over 20 types of flowers and grasses here, and the shapes of the flowers range from cross shapes to lily shapes, from orchid shapes to umbrella shapes. As for the exact species, only a qualified botanist would be able to name them one by one.

At the street market in the Kashi river valley, you can buy wild flower black bee honey. This partnership between wild flowers and bees produces one of nature's most delicious concoctions, rich in flavour and high in nutritional content.

Continuing to the southeast, we crossed the Haerkatawu Range and came to the Bayanbulak grasslands of Hejing County. Here, you can see the upper reaches of the Kaidu River twisting across the great grass plain and providing a natural haven for water plants. Every July, the blossoming plants attract thousands of feeding birds — a wondrous sight to behold.

The Hulun Buir grasslands at the easternmost tip of Inner Mongolia is one of the most popular places to view flowers. Because of the frequent rainfall in the area, vegetation is varied and abundant, making it the top destination among the six great grass plains in Inner Mongolia.

A Flower Nursery in the Mountains

Since the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, Qinghai has become a fixture on the tourist route. Most people know of Qinghai Lake, the Kunlun Mountain range and the barren Qaidam plain, but Qinghai also has many unknown yet wondrous places to discover wild flowers.

You can find numerous wild flowers simply by

1. Who can resist gathering flowers when they are this abundant? (by Adam Wong)

2. Purple lavender becomes starlets under the camera's gaze. (by Adam Wong)

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1. A blanket of gold next to the Sayram Lake in Xinjiang. (by Shi Baoxiu)

2. Wild flowers fill the grass plains of western and northern Sichuan. (by Stephen Or)

3. Hulun Buir in Inner Mongolia. (by Pu Qingxue)

4. An extra-large mushroom found in the western Sichuan grasslands. (by Shi Baoxiu)

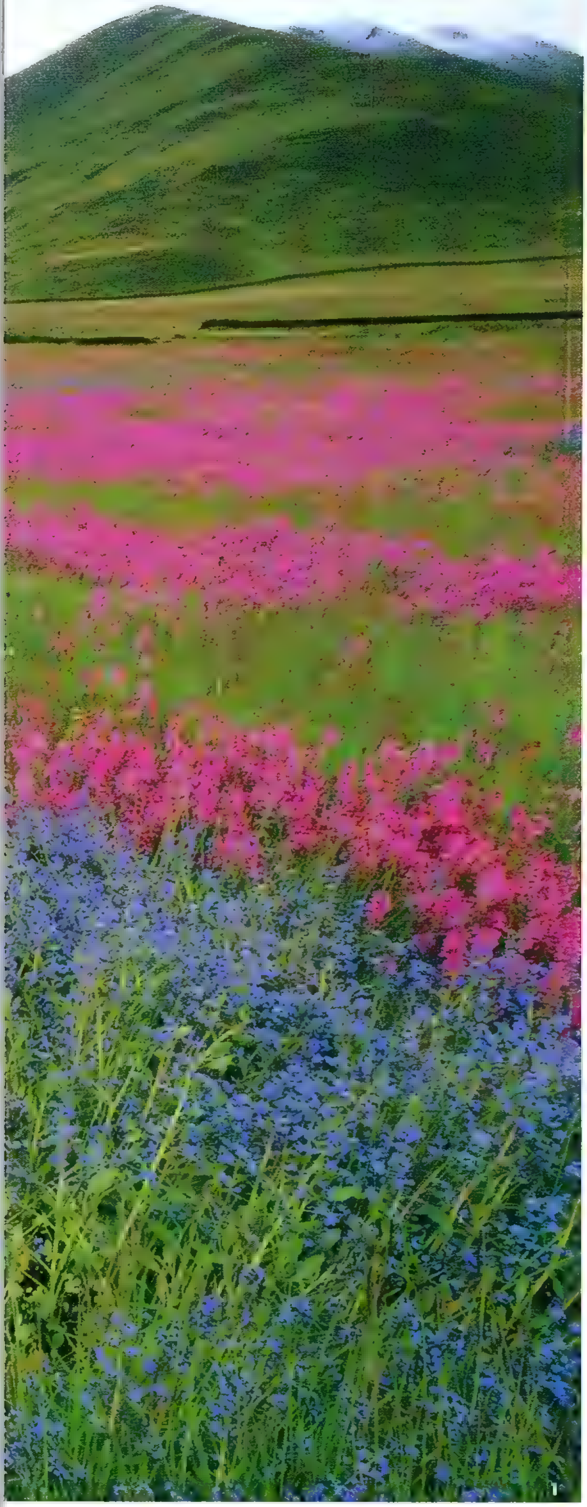
following the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. An ideal spot is close to the Burhan Budai Mountain range. Follow the highway past Qinghai Lake, cross the Xiangpi Mountain and go past Caka Salt Lake, and you'll arrive in the county of Dulan. At first glance the area doesn't seem to boast even a single blade of grass, but with a good mountain guide, after heading about 20 km into the mountains, you will be greeted by a miraculous sight. Here, among the mountain canyons and hot geysers, you will find beautiful flower-strewn plains — virtual nurseries for wild and exotic species. Due to the remote location, the species found here are rare and abundant. There is also a forest of ancient cypress trees here, and under the trees' braches you can find rare flowers and gold and silver mushrooms. In just 10 minutes, we collected about five pounds of mushrooms — a delightful gift from the forest.

One summer, I went to Yingde'er in search of the Greater Kecuo Canyon and came back with a load of mushrooms. That night I asked the cook at my lodging house to make a mushroom soup. Even though there was not an ounce of meat in the soup, it was hearty and delicious. For the next two days, my sweat had a slight mushroomy scent.

A Jewel in the Plains

That year as I was travelling to Huangnan County, and I stumbled upon two more places that are great for looking at flowers. One spot was in Zêkog, between the county town and the Heri Temple — there I saw a gently sloping field of deep purple. The other spot was a field of flowers similar to forget-me-nots clumped together thickly by the roadside in Tongren County, between Longwu Town and Guarenze grasslands. The beauty of that deep turquoise shade still reminds me of the finest jewellery.

The south of Gansu and the west of Sichuan are favourite destinations for travellers, who come to see the unique Tibetan Buddhist temples such as the Labulang Temple and the Langmu Temple. However, if you visit these two places in July, you will be greeted



by the additional sight of glorious natural scenery.

A New Birth for an Old Death Trap

In the south of Gansu and in the west of Sichuan there are wide grass plains crossed by rivers and streams. These are fed by the Yellow River, which rises in summer with glacial run-off. Many years ago, the Red Army passed through this area on their Long March to safety in Yan'an. With the enemy close on their heels and hunger draining their energy, there was little time to admire the flowers. Today, this area is abundant with colourful vegetation, much of which is aquatic.

One of my friends wrote this about the scenery in her diary: 'When we got to Magqu, the scenery around the Yellow River lived up to its wonderful reputation. But this wasn't the most attractive point about the place at all. What was amazing was the number of flowers all around us. I tried to count the number of different species and gave up by the time I got past 20 — there were just too many. We asked the local herdsmen and even they were unable to name all the different types. In the end, we started making up our own names: 'oceanflower', 'small stars', 'line of red', 'line of yellow', 'dog's ear', 'wind chime', 'chicken blood azure' ...

'Magqu in summer isn't a grass plain at all, but an ocean of flowers! An entire world of flowers.'

Translated by Bret Sutcliffe

1. Litang Tazi dam in Sichuan. (by Wang Miao)

2. The Qinghai grass plains, abundant with wild flowers. (by Shi Baoxiu)

3. The marshes of north-western Sichuan were once a death trap for the Red Army. (by Shi Baoxiu)

Flower Markets in the City

Article · Stephen Or

Every year, at the New Year's Eve flower market, I am always amazed at the flowers on offer: lotus, chrysanthemum, peach blossom and plum blossom... let alone lilies, roses, forget-me-nots and carnations. It's wonderful to see flowers from all the different seasons of the year in bloom together, all at the same time.

These days, you can find a wide variety of flowers at any time of the year in the major cities. There are hundreds of flower markets in China, but there are three that stand out from the rest as having the widest variety of flowers.

Kunming, or 'the City of Spring', has an ideal climate for flowers, and that's why Kunming was chosen to host the International Horticulture Exposition in 1999. Flowers are so common in Kunming that people buy them as if they were buying vegetables. The Shangyi Street Flower Market, for example, is always bustling with tourists purchasing flowers. You can also pay a visit to the Dounan Flower Market, where customers buy flowers by the truckload. Chenggong County, home to the Dounan Flower Market, is China's biggest production centre for flowers, with a total annual output of over 1 billion flowers. Unlike other flower markets that occupy just one street, this one is a comprehensive flower trade market covering over six hectares. It also the home of the Kunming International Flora Auction Trading Centre, which cooperates with the Holland Flora Auction Trading Market. The Dounan Flower Market dominates the national flower industry and its daily trade volume is the highest in China at 5 million to 6 million flowers. The 500-plus flower shops here sell over 300 types of flowers including lilies, roses, forget-me-nots, carnations, moth orchids, African daisies, gypsophila and many other exotic flowers and plants. Flowers are even cheaper than vegetables — for 3 to 5 yuan, you can get a big bouquet of carnations or daisies.

Chengdu, in Sichuan Province, has been known as 'the Land of Abundance' since time immemorial. Thanks to the warm and moist climate in the Sichuan Basin, Hongsha Village in the suburbs of Chengdu has become a famous base for flora cultivation, second only to the Dounan Flower Market in Kunming.

If you're looking for a beautiful floral scene in winter, pay a visit to Guangzhou. Guangzhou is known as 'the Flower City' and has a history of planting and appreciating flowers that goes back more than a thousand years. It is said that Fangcun, 'the number-one flower village in Lingnan' (located to the south of the Five Ridges, the area covering Guangdong and Guangxi provinces), is the mother of all the other flower markets in Guangzhou. Every New Year's Eve, Guangzhou hosts a flower market that covers an area of 10,000 square metres, with between 4,000 and 5,000 stands selling over 100 kinds of flowers from home and abroad.

Getting to the three flower markets

Dounan Flower Market, Kunming

Take bus number 12 from the Dongju bus station, or take a mini-bus (Chenggong), and get off at Dounancun Lukou.

Hongsha Village, Sansheng County, Chengdu

Take bus number 40, 38, 343, 56 or mini-bus 88, and get off at the Hongsha Village Flora Exposition in Hongsha Village in Sansheng County.

Fangcun Flower Market, Guangzhou

Take bus number 19, 52, 193, 206, 124, 34, 61 from downtown to your destination.

1. The Dounan Flower Market in Kunming. Every day, it's bursting with flowers and people. (by Li Zhixiong)

2. Customers at the Hongsha Village Flora Cultivation Base in Sansheng County in Chengdu. (by Yuan Yi)

3. One of the many flowerbeds in the Pearl River Delta. (by Su Longzhi)

4. The flower market on Shangyi Street in Kunming is a must-see if you visit Yunnan. (by Liu Jianming)

1

Flower Banquet in Yunnan

Photos • Li Zhixiong Article • Wang Rong

Kunming in Yunnan Province is known as the 'city of spring' because you can see different kinds of flowers there all year round. There are some rare wild flowers that can only be found during certain seasons, and when the time finally comes for these flowers to bloom, they are often used as ingredients in tasty dishes.

1. Chrysanthemum prawn cutlet: Soak the bamboo shore shrimp in fresh chrysanthemum juice, and let the shrimp fully absorb the flavour of the chrysanthemum. Then coat the shrimp with egg white and breadcrumbs and fry. The shrimp cutlet is crispy on the outside yet tender inside, with a pleasant chrysanthemum aroma. 65 yuan

2. Cold-served petals: Preserved egg is a very popular food and by adding extra ingredients to it, such as fresh chrysanthemum and carnation petals and tofu, it becomes a new cold dish. It has a delicate flavour and is a great summer food. 18 yuan

3. Aromatic lotus: Make a paste from flour, lotus juice, starch and egg whites. Then coat some bullfrogs with the paste and fry them in oil. Finally garnish with some red or green diced pepper. 38 yuan

4. Fish slices braised with rose petals: cut a grass carp into slices, marinate them in some cooking wine, salt, egg white and starch, then braise them with rose petals. This dish is light and has a fresh flavour. 28 yuan

5. Tofu with a hundred kinds of flowers: extract the juice from some fresh roses and chrysanthemum petals, and add to some mashed shrimp. Then make shrimp balls and steam them. Cut the tofu into large pieces, make a hole in each piece, and stuff the holes with the cooked shrimp balls. 28 yuan

6. Inside Xiangkexiang Restaurant.

7. Honey made from flowers.

A Chinese saying goes: 'wild flowers are better than home-grown flowers'. This is especially true when it comes to making dishes out of flowers.

Some wild flowers are only available locally, such as palm flowers. There are numerous kinds of palms and palm flowers — some are sweet; some are bitter. In Tengchong and Dehong in western Yunnan, you'll find the local dish of stir-fried meat with palm flower buds in many a restaurant. In Tengchong, there is a special dish called 'palm flower buds with tree-climbing fish', which is made by stewing wild fish with palm flower buds. If you come across this dish, you're in luck.

The Yunnan ottelia is seen less and less often these days as many lakes and rivers are polluted. The Erhai Lake in Dali, on the other hand, is relatively free from pollution and so eating Yunnan ottelia is a local tradition in this area. The Bai ethnic people pick Yunnan ottelia from the Erhai Lake, rinse them and then make a soup with the flower buds, stems, leaves and taro. This ottelia and taro soup is a much-loved local delicacy.

The Dai ethnic people in Xishuangbanna use local ingredients to make many delicious dishes. Banana flowers, for example, are used to make a steamed pork with banana flowers dish. First, they cut the banana flowers into small pieces, grind some pork and add some spices like wild coriander, then they wrap the mixture up in banana leaves and steam it in a bamboo steamer. When it's cooked, the aroma of the flower will have pervaded the meat, giving it a slightly sweet flavour. Other dishes made with banana flowers include water-boiled banana flowers, which retains the natural flavour of the flowers; and cold-served banana flowers, a great choice in hot weather.

In Yunnan, homegrown flowers are also a good source of ingredients for dishes. People commonly use the roots, stems, leaves, fruit and sometimes the flowers of vegetables for food, but rarely would anyone plant vegetables only for their flowers. But that doesn't mean vegetable flowers aren't tasty.

Let's talk first about rape flowers. The most common way to cook them is to stir-fry them with dry peppers. This tastes OK, but a real gourmet would prefer the 'Chong' dish. In Yunnan dialect, 'Chong' means 'hot tempered'. This simple dish is made by plucking the tender flower tips, then briefly boiling them and putting them in a covered bowl for a while. Whether the Chong dish is a success depends on the cook's skill at judging how long the flowers should be boiled for, and how long they should be left in the bowl, before the final step of mixing them with soy sauce and peppers.

Also worth mentioning are garlic chives and pumpkin flowers. Garlic chives are usually served as pickles, and the city of Qujing is famous as a centre of production for these pickles, which can be sweet, salty and spicy. Male pumpkin flowers do not contain fruit, but local people use them to make delicious dishes — for example stir-fried with minced garlic or steamed with meatballs.

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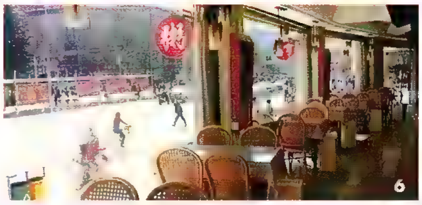
Got a craving for a flower banquet?

Xiangkexiang Restaurant

Add: Downstairs at the Friendship Hotel, No. 304,
Renmin Rd E, Kunming
Tel: (871) 339 1628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During the flower season, restaurants work hard to produce unique and delicious flower dishes. The Xiangkexiang Restaurant in Kunming, for example, has created its own special flower dishes according to the flowers' medicinal uses. All these dishes are hard to find elsewhere.

Translated by Nicole Ouyang

7

Happy Birthday! HKSAR

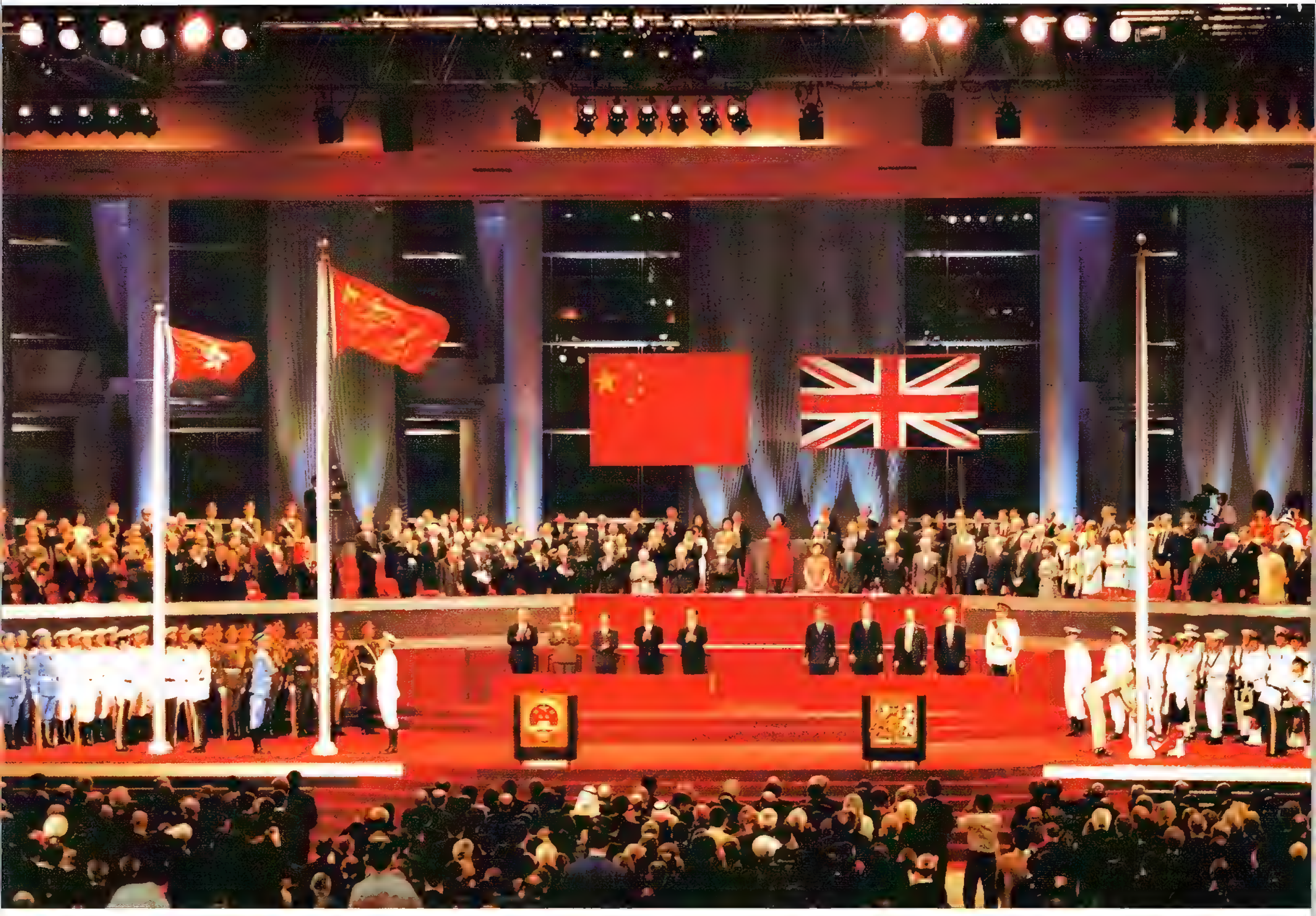
1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2

The first of July in 2007 marks the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China, her motherland. Over the past 10 years, with strong support from the Central Government, Hong Kong has overcome a variety of difficulties. Today, Hong Kong's society and economy moves forward healthily and prosperously. Now, let's review every valuable moment to see how the HKSAR has survived a better society all these ten years.

Review of History

China Resumes Exercise of Sovereignty Over Hong Kong

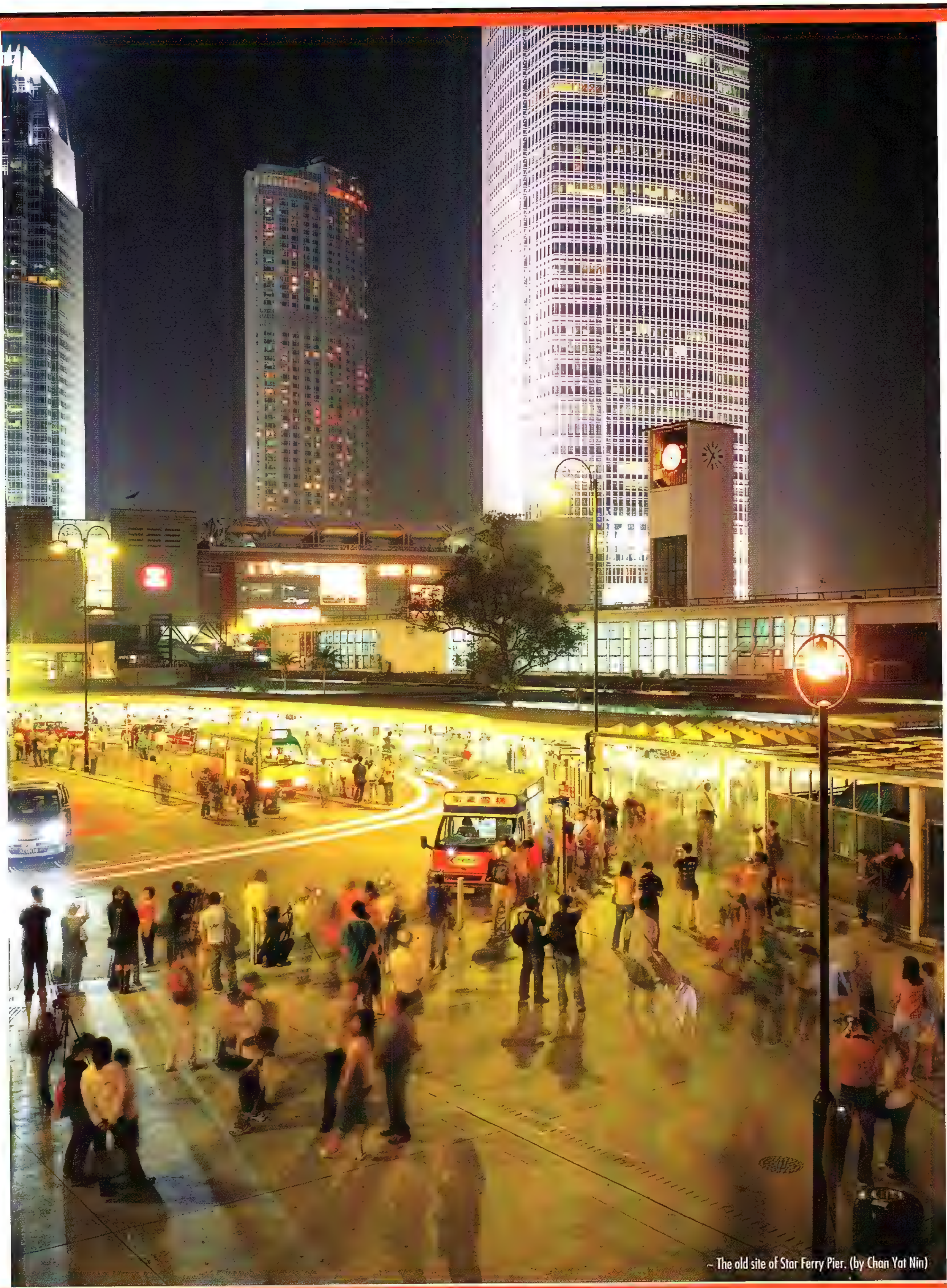
At midnight of 30 June, 1997, the Chinese and British governments held a handover ceremony at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. In the first minute of 1 July, a five-star flag and a bauhinia flag rose from the New Extension of the Centre, indicating that the People's Republic of China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong.



~ On 1 July, 1997, the Chinese and British governments hold a handover ceremony at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. (by Wang Miao)

~ In the early morning of 1 July, 1997, a total of 4,000 PLA soldiers from the army, navy and air force simultaneously entered Hong Kong from Wenjindu (Man Kam To), Shatoujiao (Sha Tau Kok) and Huanggang ports located at the border of Shenzhen Economic Special Zone, officially taking up the responsibility of maintaining the security of the HKSAR. In the photo, residents in the New Territories wave five-star flags in the rain to welcome PLA troops. (by Tsang Wai Tak)

In the afternoon of 1 July, 1997, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association held a grand blessing ceremony in celebration of Hong Kong's return to China at the Hong Kong Stadium. Nearly a thousand monks and more than 40,000 believers from Hong Kong and abroad gave their blessings to Hong Kong, China and the beautiful and harmonious future of the world. (by Wang Miao)



~ The old site of Star Ferry Pier. (by Chan Yat Nin)

~ Residents protest against the dismantling of the Queen's Pier. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Relocation of Star Ferry Pier

To make way for the land reclamation project in the Central District, the 48-year-old Star Ferry Pier was relocated on 12 November, 2006, to a new site, about an eight-minute walk away.

At midnight of 11 November, Star Ferry launched its 'farewell voyage'. More than 1,800 people were on board four ferries to show their reluctance at the pier's relocations. Many people took photos to remember the old site.

The Queen's Pier, just beside the old Star Ferry Pier, was closed on 26 April, 2007. The 53-year-old public pier was replaced by the newly built Pier 9 at the Central District Pier.

The Third-term of HKSAR Chief Executive

Incumbent Donald Tsang Yam-kuen won more than 80 percent of the ballots in the election of the third-term HKSAR Chief Executive on 25 March, 2007. Of the 772 valid votes cast by members of the Election Committee, Tsang and Alan Leong, Tsang's only contender, won 649 and 123 respectively.

After he was appointed, Tsang promised to lead the HKSAR government in a pragmatic manner and to take Hong Kong's development to new heights in the next five years.

做好呢份工
I'll get the job done!
曾蔭權參選行政長官記者會
Donald Tsang for Chief Executive
Press Conference
共創好環境

~ Donald Tsang's slogan in the election campaign is 'I'll get the job done'. (provided by China News Service)

Development of Society

Feb 200
McDonald's
shama

Times Square is the largest shopping mall in Causeway Bay. The flow of customers and passers-by is non-stop all day. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Revival of Economy Bolsters All Sectors

In recent years, Hong Kong has revived from the stagnation caused by internal problems such as the outbreak of bird flu and SARS and the external impacts of the Asian financial crisis. The finance and stock markets as well as the real estate sectors of the Hong Kong economy have become active again. Under the influence of the strong Chinese economy, Hong Kong has strengthened its economic and trade cooperation with the mainland, playing an active role in the finance, trade and financial service fields.

~ The Hong Kong Food Expo opens. (provided by Chinese News Service)

Growing of Exhibition Business

Hong Kong's economy has grown for three consecutive years since 2004, at a rate of 8.6 percent in 2004 and 7.3 percent in 2005. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) also has an increase of 6.8% in 2006. Besides the prosperous stock and real estate markets, Hong Kong's exhibition industry has also witnessed rapid development. Tens of thousands of overseas companies come to exhibit in the international exhibition centre. Almost 30 international trade exhibitions are held in Hong Kong every year, including the seven largest shows in Asia.

The ITU Telecom World 2006 was held in Hong Kong in December, the first time the International Telecommunications Union holding this event outside Geneva. The event, one of the largest exhibitions in Hong Kong's history, attracted more than 60,000 participants.

Athletics Development Reflects Hong Kong Spirit

Since its return to China, Hong Kong has participated in the Olympic Games, Asian Games and many other major international games under the name 'Hong Kong, China', and has performed well. At the Doha Asian Games at the end of 2006, Hong Kong athletes won six golds, 12 silvers and 10 bronzes, its best performance since first participating in the Asian Games in 1952.

Hong Kong has produced many outstanding athletes over the past 10 years, including the renowned windsurfer Lee Lai-shan, Olympics, Asian Games and National Games gold medalist and world champion cyclist Wong Kam-po, and men's double table tennis Olympic silver medalists Li Ching and Ko Lai Chak. Hong Kong has more than 600 elite athletes.

~ The silver medalists in table tennis men's double at the Athens Olympics return to Hong Kong. (provided by China News Service)

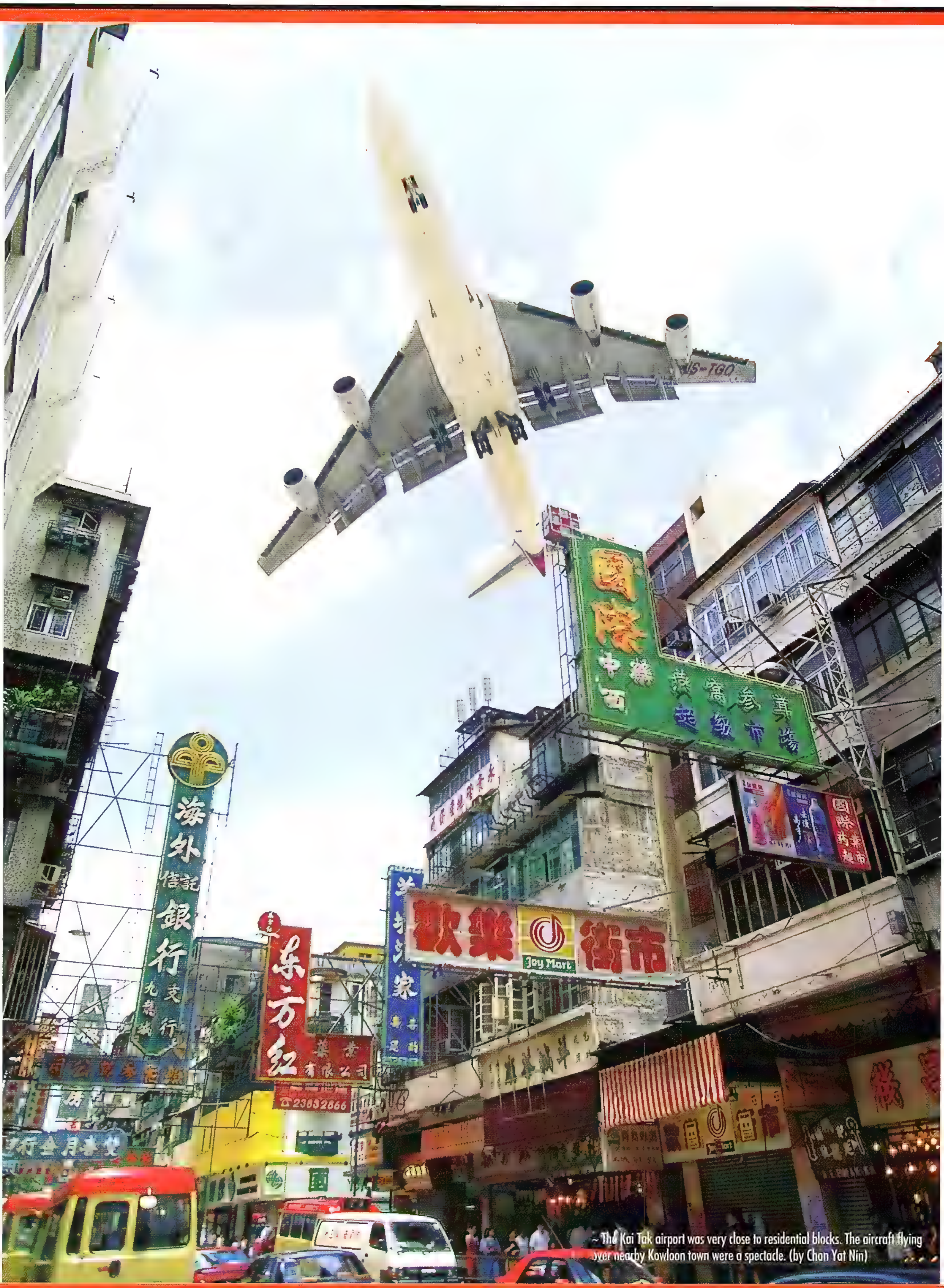
~ The magnificent sight of Tsing Ma Bridge. (by Yick Sing Kaw)

Rapid Transportation Development

On midnight of 5 July, 1998, Kai Tak airport in the centre of Kowloon was closed after 73 years. In the early morning of 6 July, the new Hong Kong International Airport costing 100 billion HK dollars began operating.

Tsing Ma Bridge spans the strait between Tsing Yi Island and Ma Wan Island. It is an icon of Hong Kong. It is the longest span suspension double-deck bridge in the world that carries both a motorway and railway. Tsing Ma Bridge and North Lantau Highway together form Lantau Link, leading to Chek Lap Kok Airport. Alongside Lantau Link is the Airport Express. It is a convenient and speedy way to go from downtown Hong Kong to the airport.

~ The Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok is one of the busiest airports in the world. (by Ko Chi Keung)


國際
歡樂
Joy Mart
街市
海外信託銀行
东方红

The Kai Tak airport was very close to residential blocks. The aircraft flying over nearby Kowloon town were a spectacle. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Constant Growth of Tourism

~ Each March, people flock, night and day, to the Hong Kong Flower Show in Victoria Park. (by Guo Jianshe)

'Blooming' Hong Kong

Hong Kong people love flowers, and flowers are available in Hong Kong in all seasons. In Mong Kok, Kowloon, the Flower Market is packed with large and small flower shops. In the New Territories, numerous gardens supply flowers to Hong Kong citizens throughout the year. During Chinese New Year, a number of flower markets will be set up in different places from a week before the New Year to the early morning of Chinese New Year's Day. On the eve of Chinese New Year, as the clock is ticking towards midnight, the flower markets are awash with a sea of people and flowers. The colourful scene is unforgettable.

Each spring, Hong Kong holds a number of flower exhibitions. The largest exhibition is the Hong Kong Flower Show in Victoria Park, Causeway Bay. A theme flower will dominate the show each year. Other rare and exotic flowers from China and other parts of the world will add to the glamour of the show. Gardens in different styles are set up. For visitors to the show, it is a feast for the eyes.

~ The Mai Po marshes have a large population of egret. Most of them are 'permanent residents.' (by Chan Yat Nin)

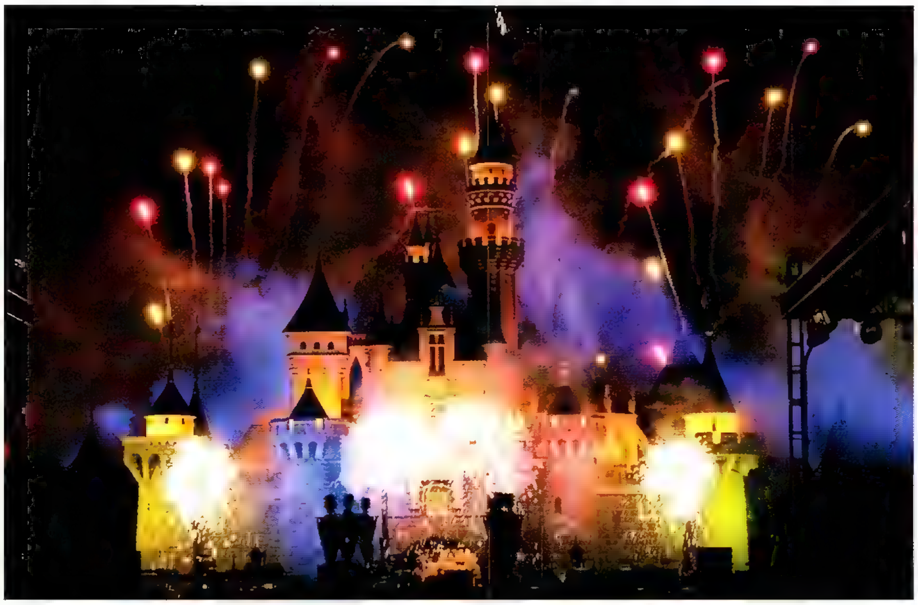
Eco-friendly Tourist Sights Established

Located in the North New Territories, Mai Po Nature Reserve (MPNR) is a broad expanse of wetlands with dense mangroves and many water birds flying freely. In autumn and winter each year, tens of thousands of migratory birds migrate here to pass the winter. Of them, there are a lot of endangered species. Mai Po is hence given the title 'Bird Watching Paradise.'

Disneyland in Hong Kong

In order to consolidate Hong Kong's role as a regional tourism centre, the HKSAR government and the Walt Disney Company held talks over one year, and signed an agreement in November 1999 to build a Disneyland theme park in Chok Ko Wan on Lantau Island with a joint investment of 22.5 billion HK dollars. The HKSAR government holds a 57-percent stake in the venture.

The first phase of the world's fifth Disney theme park was opened on 12 September, 2005. Disney plans to expand the Hong Kong Disneyland to attract more visitors because the area of first phase of the park is too small, and the facilities are insufficient.



~ A grand parade at Disneyland attracts lots of tourists. (by Guo Jianshe)

The Irresistible Victoria Peak

Victoria Peak, standing about 500 metres above sea level, is a must-see for tourists. It has been ranked as the top scenic spot in Hong Kong for several years running. From the top of The Peak there is a breath-taking bird's-eye view of the spectacular Victoria Harbour, while The Peak Galleria offers such facilities as games, shopping, good food and entertainment. The saying that 'One has not been to Hong Kong until one has visited The Peak' has never been more true.

Marché
THE PEAK TOWER
Asia's world city
MADAME TUSSAUDS

~ The Peak Tower at The Peak Galleria combines eating, drinking, fun and entertainment. (by Adam Wong)

~ Youngsters from the Chinese mainland show off their *kungfu* in front of the Bruce Lee statue on the Avenue of Stars. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Avenue of Stars

The East Waterfront Promenade in Kowloon is the best choice to experience Victoria Harbour. In 2003, the 800-metre Avenue of Stars was established to honour the star-studded Hong Kong film industry. The avenue includes a statue that symbolises the Hong Kong Film Awards, the statue of international superstar Bruce Lee and a group statue that portrays a film crew in action. On the pavement are the handprints of outstanding film stars and industry stalwarts. The avenue adds much to the pleasure of strolling along the promenade.

~ The floating seafood restaurant in Aberdeen's typhoon shelter is popular with visitors. (by Adam Wong)

Constant Charming Seafood of Hong Kong

Hong Kong Island was a charming fishing port before the British colonisation. The place 'Hong Kong' originally referred to Aberdeen in southern Hong Kong. Aberdeen today remains a fascinating place. It is a bustling port with sailing and fishing boats. Many yachts are anchored inside the typhoon shelter. The floating seafood restaurants and Ocean Park are also well-known symbols of the district.

East Meets West

Chinese Traditions and Customs

Hong Kong is a city where East meets West and where different religions coexist peacefully — traditional Chinese religions and foreign religions are worshipped side by side. Hong Kongers commonly adhere to Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, and also revere various local gods.

In this context, numerous fascinating folk customs remain popular.

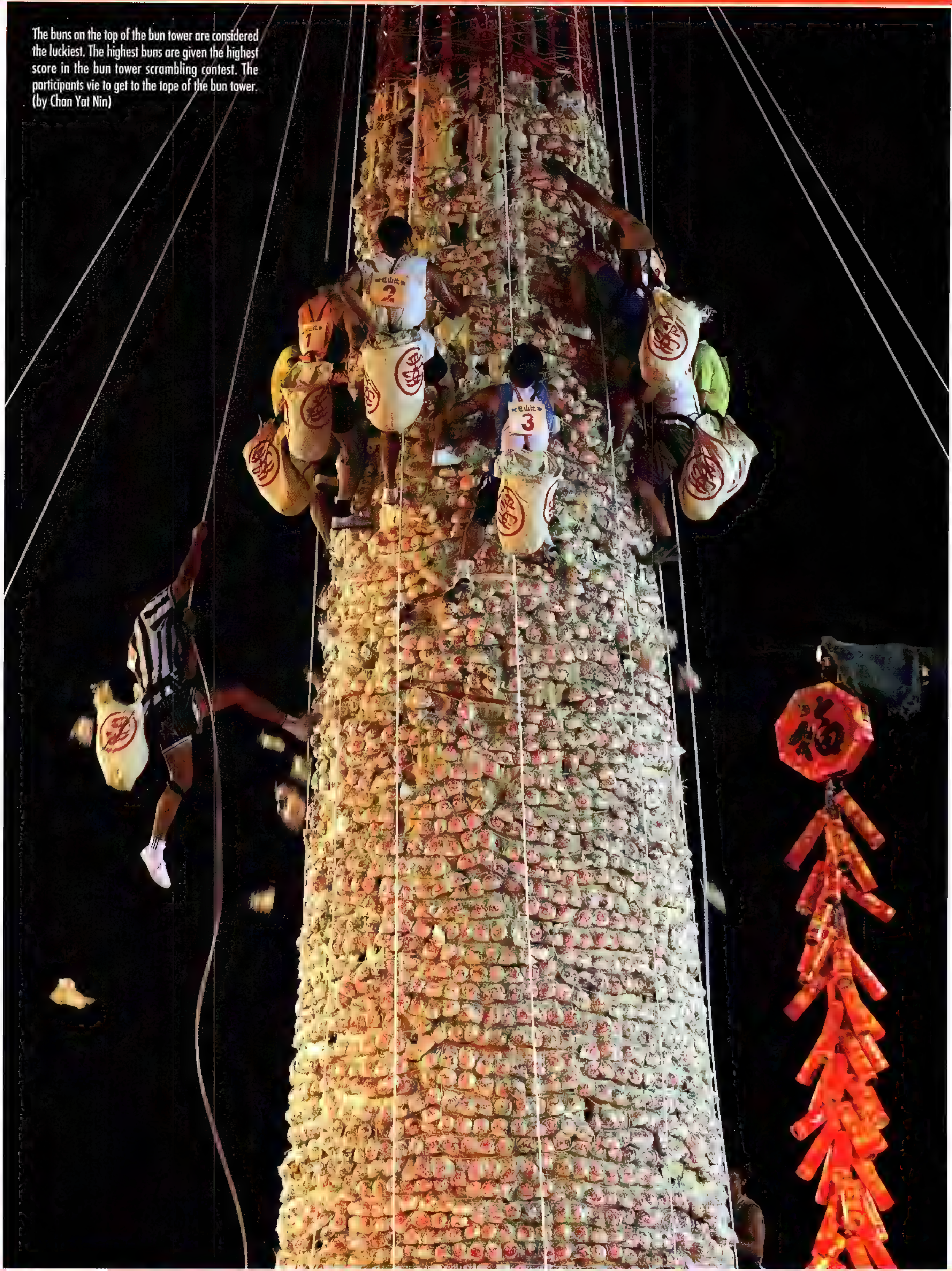
~ The Wong Tai Sin Temple, located in Wong Tai Sin district in Kowloon, is the temple with the largest number of worshippers in Hong Kong. People believe that Wong Tai Sin, a Taoist oracle, will grant the wishes of those who pray sincerely. And so, whenever a believer has a wish, he or she will visit Wong Tai Sin Temple. At the dawn of the Chinese New Year, tens of thousands of adherents from all over Hong Kong flock to the temple, hoping to present the first joss-sticks of the New Year to the gods. (by Liu Lei)

~ 'Villain hitting' (or 'da siu yan' in Cantonese) is a type of folk sorcery. When someone has bad luck and believes to be in the spell of a mean person, he can visit Ngo Keng Kiu (under the Canal Road Flyover) in Wan Chai. There, s/he can pay a professional 'villain hitter', mostly Da middle-aged and senior woman, to hit the mean person, a symbolic small doll, and curse the 'villain'. In that way, her or his bad luck will go away. (by Hu Wugong)

Birthday of Buddha and Cheung Chau Bun Festival

At the Birthday of Buddha this year, it was also the Chueng Chau Bun Festival Day. Held on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the Bun Festival is a great example of Hong Kong's rich folk heritage.

Cheung Chau is a famous fishing island. In the mid-Qing dynasty (1644 — 1911), a lot of islanders died from the perils of the sea as well as from plague. To pay back the blessings of gods and bring peace to the deceased, the survivors periodically held rituals by chanting Taoist scriptures to expiate the sins of the dead. Gradually, the local people formed a whole set of unique folk custom activities. The Bun Festival is the most exciting part which includes a parade and bun tower scrambling contest.



The buns on the top of the bun tower are considered the luckiest. The highest buns are given the highest score in the bun tower scrambling contest. The participants vie to get to the tope of the bun tower. (by Chan Yat Nin)

~ During the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, colourful dragon boat contests are staged in the waterways of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. The Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races has become one of the most famous dragon boat contests in the world. (by Yick Sing Kaw)

Celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival

Hong Kong is an international city that boasts a distinctive Chinese culture. Many Chinese festivals are celebrated here.

Fire Dragon Dance during Mid-Autumn Festival

The dancing fire dragon is a traditional festive activity for the local people of Tai Hang, Causeway Bay District during the Mid-autumn Festival.

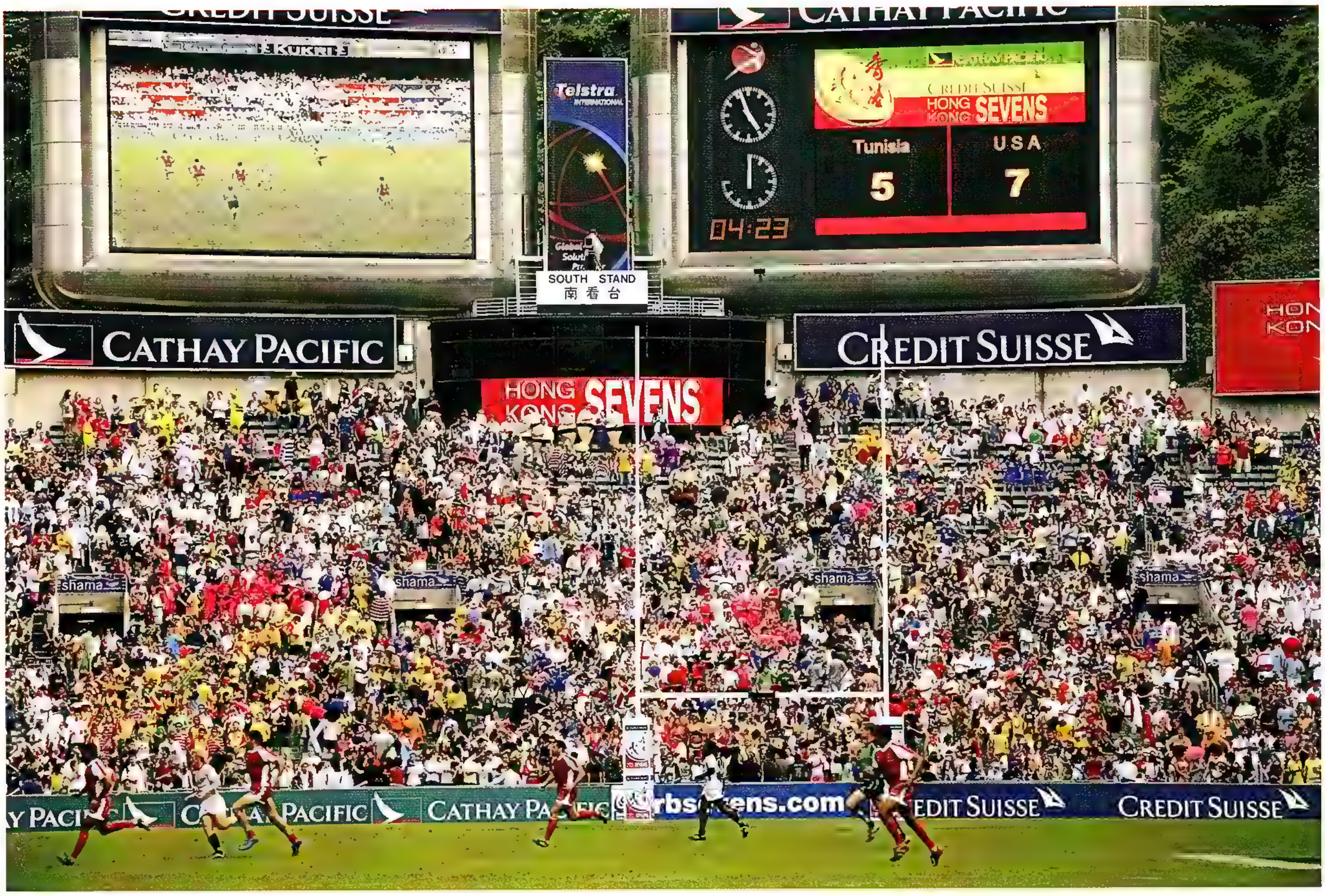
It is said that in the Qing dynasty (1644 — 1911), Tai Hang was hit by plague. The local people had a revelation that they should perform fire dragon dancing during the Mid-autumn Festival to expel ghosts and terminate the plague — hence the custom. Today, on the evenings of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth days of the eighth month in the lunar calendar each year, Tai Hang residents will dance the fire dragon dance.

~ The fire dragon used in the Tai Hang fire dragon dance, is dozens of metres long and made of weed. The dragon has joss sticks stuck all over its body. Before the dance, the joss sticks will be lit. During the dance, the fire dragon is a riot of colour and movement. (by Chan Yat Nin)

~ At 12 noon on a day in March 2007, a loud gun blasting from the typhoon shelter at Causeway Bay marked the revival of the noontime gun salute ceremony, which has a history of over 150 years. This practice originated from the early stages of the colonisation period. Since 1843, the gun was fired was made at noontime every day. Except for the three years and eight months of Japanese occupation, the practice has never stopped. (by Hu Wugong)

~ At the night of 31 December, 1999, the HKSAR government held a Millennium Extravaganza at the Happy Valley Racecourse to celebrate the new millennium. Horse race is still hot in Hong Kong today. (by Xie Guanghui)

2000
香港千禧盃
Hong Kong Millennium Cup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~ The Hong Kong Sevens heats up the Hong Kong Stadium. (by Chan Yat Nin)

The Hot Hong Kong Sevens

The Hong Kong Sevens, held each spring, is a major event that attracts international attention. Tens of thousands of foreign rugby fans flock to Hong Kong in anticipation of a weekend of thrilling action. Despite a capacity of 40,000, not a single seat at the Hong Kong Stadium goes unsold. The rugby teams stage heart-gripping melees, and fans look on, enjoying the carnival atmosphere. It was already the 31st year of the event.

~ Fans cheer, yell, and have fun. It's a carnival atmosphere. (by Chan Yat Nin)

The City that Never Sleeps

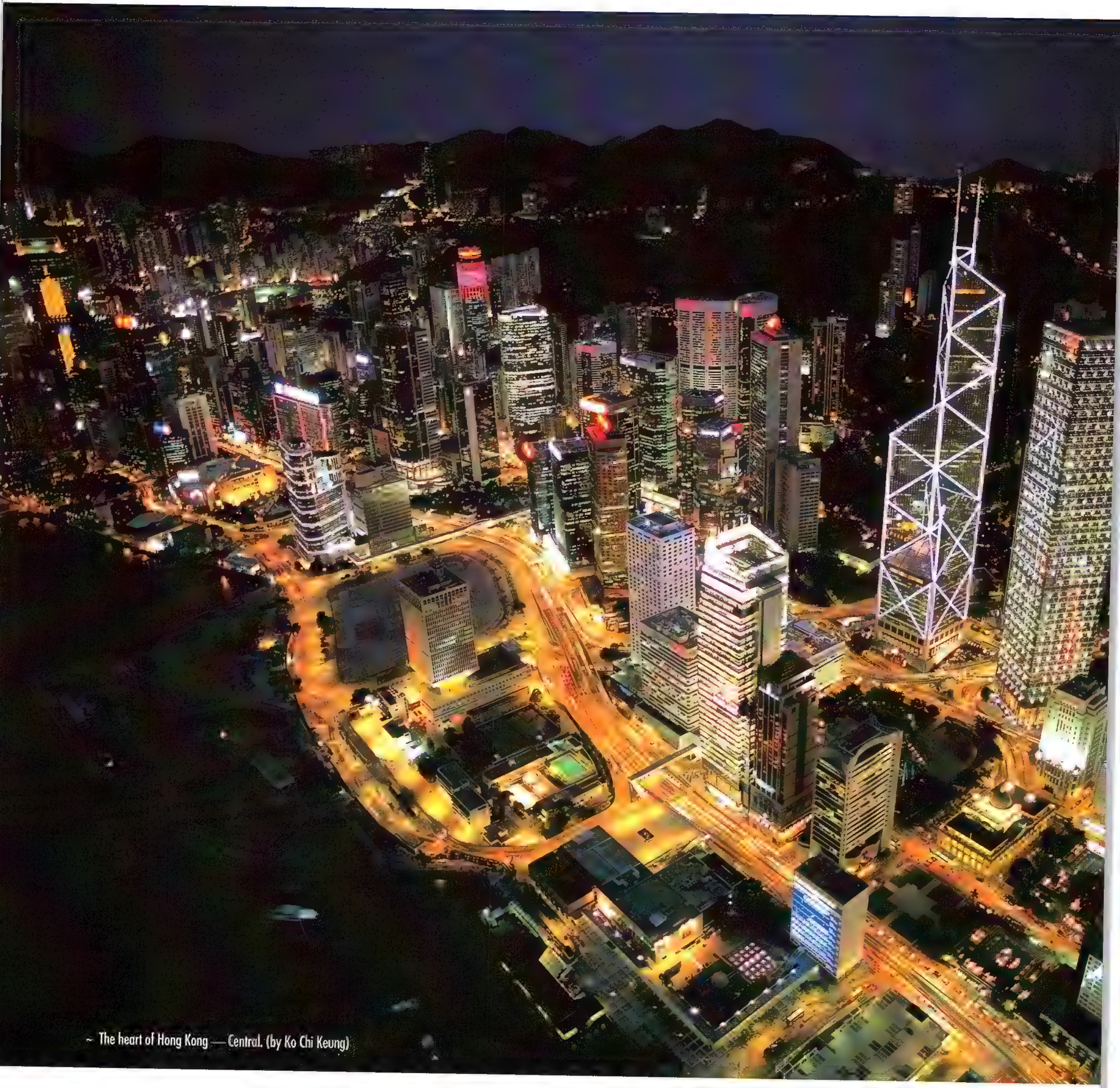
Hong Kong is referred to as one of the top three cities with the best night scenes in the world. In the evening when the neon lights are lit, the north and south shores of Victoria Harbour are brilliant. The vibrancy and glamour of the night vista, with towering skyscrapers on both sides of Victoria Harbour is showcased. From Halloween, Christmas and New Year's Day to Chinese New Year, the festivites in the town create an amazing night-time scene.

~ Lan Kwai Fong is Hong Kong's famous bar street, with a rich European flavour. At Halloween each year, hip young people stalk the street dressed up as ghosts and ghouls, creating a surreal atmosphere. (by Chan Yat Nin)

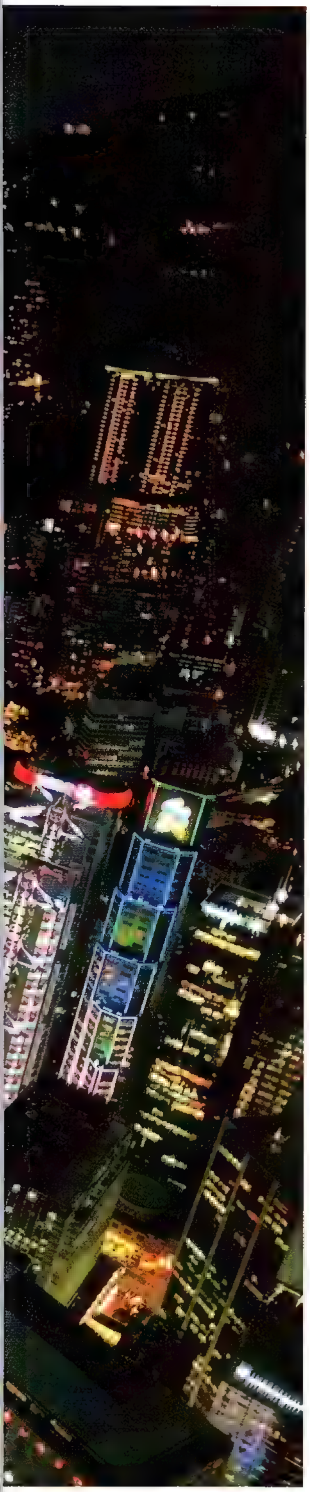
~ From Christmas to Chinese New Year each year, the festive lights in Tsim Sha Tsui East are breath-taking. (by Adam Wong)

SEASON'S GREETINGS
REGAL
BUS STOP

Anticipating a Greater Future



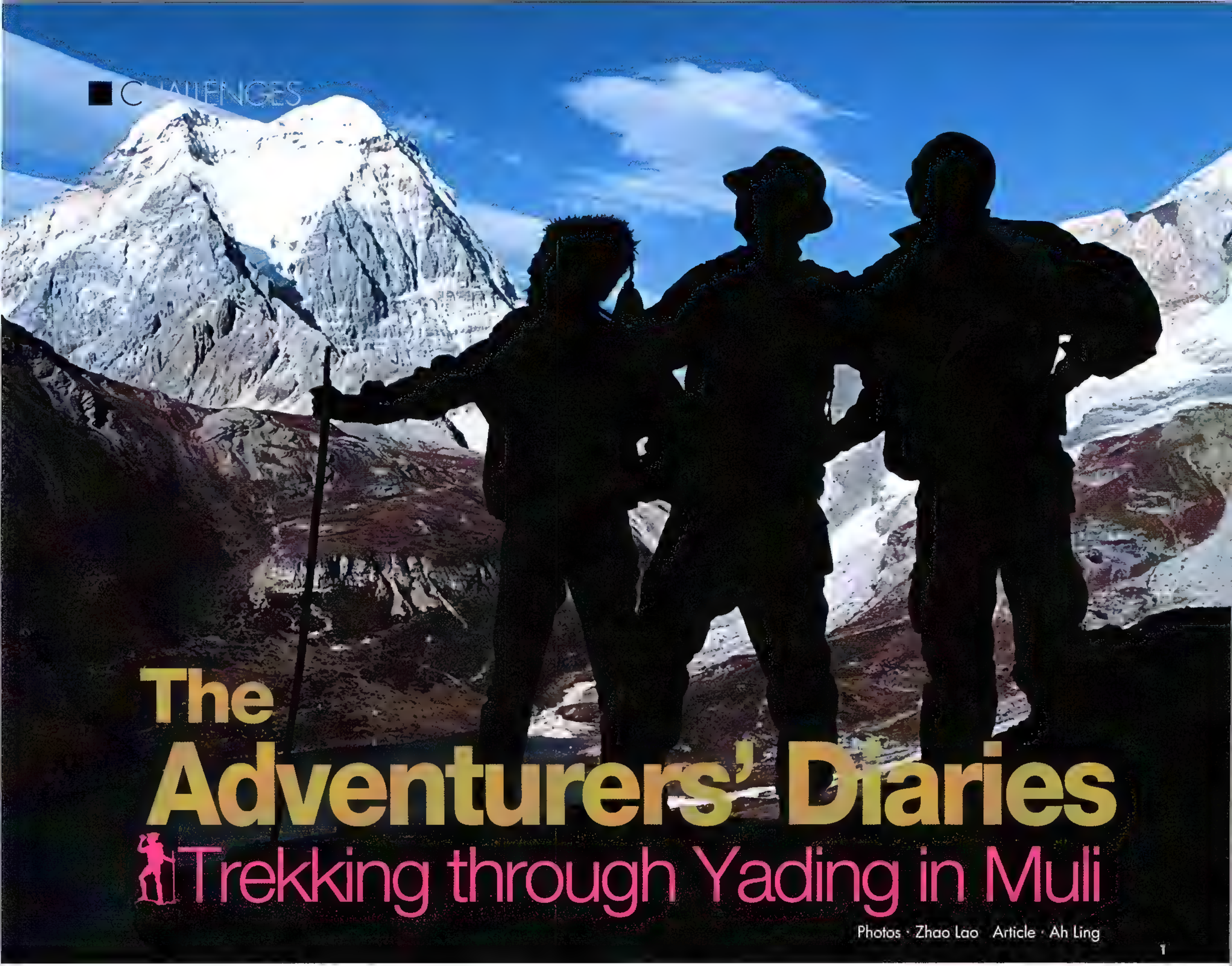
~ The heart of Hong Kong — Central. (by Ko Chi Keung)



~ The PLA Hong Kong Garrison performs a parade for its visitors. (by Yick Sing Kaw)

The PLA Hong Kong Garrison in Hong Kong

Since the People's Liberation Army (PLA) took up its garrison in Hong Kong 10 years ago, it has maintained a good relationship with Hong Kong citizens. The PLA base is partially open to Hong Kongers on Labour Day (1 May), SAR Establishment Day (1 July), Army Day (1 August) and National Day (1 October). Parades and cultural and artistic shows are performed for the visitors. These opportunities for interaction help to strengthen the mutual understanding between the PLA and Hong Kong's citizens. And with Hong Kongers' 'Work hard, Play hard' spirit, the territory is promised for a brighter future.

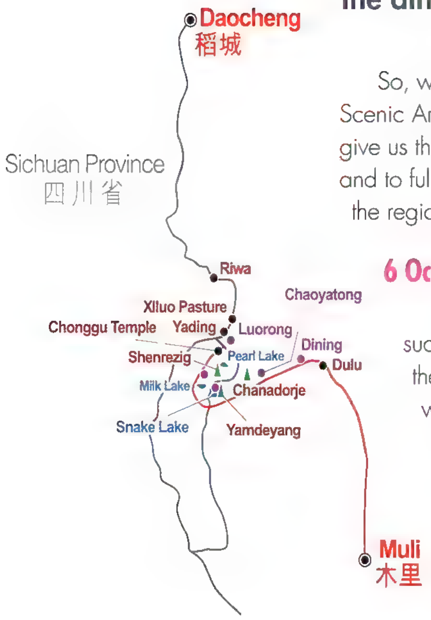


The Adventurers' Diaries

Trekking through Yading in Muli

Photos · Zhao Lao Article · Ah Ling

Without a doubt, the scenery in China is the most beautiful and splendid in the world, and the landscape of western China is the quintessence of this beauty. However, as the economy and tourism have developed so fast, one can hardly tell the difference between 'development' and 'destruction'.



So, we chose to travel on foot through the Yading Scenic Area in western China. We knew this would give us the opportunity to take the area to our hearts, and to fully experience the nature and folk customs of the region.

6 October Chengdu — Xichang

It has been a long time since we've sat in such hard seats on a train. We didn't choose these seats to save money; it was just that we were unable to buy any tourist tickets. (Accommodation on the train)

7 October Xichang — Muli

We arrived at Xichang train station just after 5 a.m. and hurried straight to the bus heading for Muli. Unfortunately, all the seats had been taken, even though the bus was not due to set out until 7 a.m.

All the standard buses travel through Yanyuan County, a really attractive part of the country. The countryside and landscapes here are just as beautiful as the red-hued landscapes of Dongchuan. We reached Muli County just after lunch. The landscape here was extremely beautiful too, full of undulating mountains and old, tall trees. No wonder Muli is considered such a major tourist attraction.

Accommodation Muli Great Hotel, standard double room, 90 yuan per night, very clean!

Transport We left Xichang at 8 a.m. and arrived at Muli at 4 p.m., 53.5 yuan per person.

8 October Muli — Dilu (2,300 metres)

We headed out in a jeep for Dulu, the starting point of our trek. By 2 p.m., we had already motored up several mountains, passing dense clumps of wild Indian azalea on the way. Our driver told us that the azalea flowers bloom in mid-May. Mid-afternoon, we travelled through a pass at an altitude of 4,400 metres. And at 6 p.m. we arrived in a village. The view of the golden qingke highland barley fields and the beautiful Tibetan-style buildings literally left me speechless.

Accommodation We stayed at a stableman's house and slept in our sleeping bags. Our host kindly provided supper for free.

Point of interest Along this route there were many lush trees, many of which are firs. It is easily as beautiful as the Kunes Forest Park in Xinjiang. There are only a few households in Dulu, each with its own natural water supply, and locals have planted pretty blossoming flowers in front of their homes. It is well worth staying here for a night or two if time allows.

9 October Dulu Dining Campsite (2,800 metres)

Difficulty: easy / Trekking time: 6 hours / Altitude: 2,300 ~ 2,800 metres

For breakfast, we had some zanba, made from roasted qingke highland barley flour. We packed our backpacks, prepared the horses, and at 8.30 a.m. set off on our five-day trek. We hired two horses to carry our backpacks, and Zhao Lao carried a 20-pound bag containing our photographic equipment. A young stableman had two more horses ready for us for later in the trip, in case we grew weary.

We passed some 'pyramids' soon after setting out. Ah Ling guessed correctly that these were actually Mani piles — piles of stones carved with sacred words and images of the Buddha. I was captivated by the view of these Mani piles with the backdrop of terraced fields, and couldn't help but take lots of pictures.

Soon the white-water Baishui River came into sight, and then we reached the Shuiluo Gold Mine. Several foreigners, carrying large, heavy backpacks, overtook us. I couldn't help feeling respect for them.

We had a snack on the banks of the Baishui River, then began our climb into the Highlands. For the next two hours, we climbed faster and faster, and we saw waterfalls that were more and more beautiful. At about 4 p.m., we finally reached the dining campsite. For the first time, we had to set up our tents by ourselves.

10 October Dining — Chaoyatong Campsite

Difficulty: very hard / Trekking time: 9 hours / Altitude: 2,800 ~ 4,090 metres

As soon as we set off, we were faced with an arduous uphill climb, which left us exhausted. After two hours, we reached the Shenxiandong (Cave of Deities) Waterfall. A source of the Baishui River, the waterfall was gentle and refined.

We carried on climbing up the slope. There were too many beautiful scenes to take in — the snow-capped mountains, the forests, the rivers and a simple cow-herder. We were so exhausted that it was all we could do to gesture to one another and nod, as we passed by such spectacular surroundings.

Two hours later, we finally arrived at the flat-bottomed valley of Mancuo. The terrain meant we

1. A view of Shenrezig Mountain from Snake Lake.

2. Taking a picture of the crisscrossing streams at Chonggu Temple.

could ride our horses along this section of the path, and we were more than ready for a slightly easier journey. So, that young stableman who had brought along his unused horses finally got our business now. By now, Zhao Lao and Old Guan had fallen far behind. They were offered butter tea by a Tibetan family they met along the way. Coincidentally, their host was the cow-herder we had seen as we walked up the slope.

We arrived at the North Tibetan Pasture — a meadow surrounded by snow-capped mountains and streams.

We did not have to set up our tents today, as we stayed in houses built by herdsmen for use when they graze their flocks.

Don't miss We have been coming to western China for years and have seen hundreds of different rivers, but to us the colour of the Baishui River was as beautiful as the Kanas River, a river in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region that is renowned for its magnificence. And the waterfalls of the Baishui River were just as powerful as the Chishui (Red Water) Waterfalls in Guizhou Province.

Challenges We knew we had to reach the campsite before nightfall, so we couldn't stay in any one place for too long to take pictures. The strong light contrast in the Baishui River valley made it quite difficult to take good pictures.

We had climbed nearly 1,300 metres in one day, and were all worn out. Getting to the next destination was a bit of a rush, so we couldn't spend much time taking pictures of the beautiful scenery.

11 October **Chaoyatong — Qunieacuozhumu**

Difficulty: hard / Trekking time: 7 hours / Altitude: 4,090, 4,650 and 4,230 metres

We finally reached the southern slopes of the Chanadorje Mountains. The morning sun cast a golden glow on the slopes. However, shooting the scenery was no picnic — we had to endure strong winds and temperatures of -10 degrees Celsius. Higher up, we reached the Chaitong Pasture, a perfect place to enjoy the scenery of the southern slopes of Chanadorje, the Jambeyang Mountains and more snow-capped mountains beyond.

Having lapped up this beautiful scene, we headed for our ultimate challenge — the Riwa Pass, at an altitude of 4,650 metres.

1. Mani piles in Dulu Village.

2. Talking with shepherds and drinking butter tea in Luorong Pasture.

3. Early in the morning on the third day of our trip, we travelled through the Chaitong Pasture. Straight ahead was the Jambeyang Mountain, and on the left were two snow-capped peaks.

After a relatively easy trip through a landscape filled with red bushes, we arrived at the foot of the Riwa Pass. The altitude here was 4,100 metres, and we would have to climb a further 550 metres higher, taking a zigzagging mountain path up a slope of almost 80 degrees. It was expected to take one hour.

Finally, we reached the mid-point. When we looked back, we saw the amazing contrast of the red bushes in the foothills against the white, rolling snow-capped mountains on both sides. Despite being physically and spiritually exhausted, we were still able to feast our eyes on this heavenly scene.

At 12:30 p.m., we reached our lunch site for the day — the southern foothills of the Jambeyang Mountains, at an altitude of 4,450 metres. The gravely path surface was crisscrossed by small streams. After lunch we had to trek along these gravel paths for about two hours. Luckily we didn't have to climb any slopes, so this part of the trip was a little easier.

Soon the gravel paths came to an end, and we rested at the top of a small hill. Lurong, our stableman, pointed out the campsite where we were going to stay that night. Just by looking at it, I thought we would be able to get there in about 20 minutes. Actually, after crossing lots of streams and meadows, it took us an hour.

The southern slope of the Jambeyang was steep. Only its summit was covered in snow. At sunset, the Jambeyang looked as if it was wearing a golden crown.

Challenge Climbing two 4,650-metre-high passes used up all our energy.

12 October Quniuacuozhumu — Snake Lake

Difficulty: hard - 7 hours' plod / Altitude: 4,500 ~ 4,680 metres

Again we awoke to a sunny morning on the southeastern slopes of Jambeyang. The temperature was -10 degrees Celsius, and there was a frost outside the tent. The sacred snow-capped mountains, the beautiful pastures, the horses roaming free and the elegant clouds together created an extremely beautiful picture.

We spent an hour and a half climbing from 4,230 metres' to 4,500 metres' altitude, from where we could see the chains of snow-capped peaks on the northern side of Jambeyang. It was an amazing sight. Then we continued along the mountain slope, making our way past black rocks and more Mani piles. To our left, at 2,000 metres altitude, was the start of the Kasi Valley. After less than an hour, we arrived at the Heihu (Black Lake) Pass, at an altitude of 4,680 metres. The water in the lake looked dark green.

Beyond the Heihu Pass, the landscape was dotted with bushes and meadows. We knew we couldn't relax until we had made our way through a pass known as Renqijue (No Human Track), at an altitude of 4,600 metres. This pass led to Snake Lake. We knew our campsite was not far off. From the campsite, we would be able to reach the beautiful Shehu (Snake Lake) and the Shenrezig and Jambeyang mountains

after our painstaking four-day trip! It was a reward that we deserved.

The Snake Lake campsite was on the opposite side of the pass. At an altitude of 4,485 metres, it was extremely windy. From here, we could appreciate the jagged masculinity of Jambeyang Mountain. Zhao Lao set aside the tent and took picture after picture of the golden-bathed peak. This was our last opportunity during the trip to appreciate the magnificent sunset scene at Jambeyang at our leisure.

Don't miss It was a great privilege to see Jambeyang Mountain from various perspectives and at different times of the day. The Black Lake and Snake Lake are also unique, the Snake Lake in particular appearing huge and dark green in colour.

Challenges During the seven-hour plod, we spent six hours at an altitude of more than 4,500 metres, and we had to trudge over two passes. It pushed us to our physical limits.

13 October Snake Lake — Luorong Pasture

Difficult: very hard - 5 hours' plod / Altitude: 4,600 ~ 4,100 metres

Setting out from the Snake Lake campsite, it was a one-hour trip to the Shenrezig Pass. Dimly we saw the Niunai (Milk) Lake at the foot of the snow-capped Shenrezig Mountains. The scenes along the way were beautiful, and we had plenty of time, so we took pictures as we walked along. Soon we reached the Wuse (Five-Colour) Lake. Zhao Lao had been to Yading five years before. It was satisfying to hear him saying that the environment at both the lakes had not changed at all in five years.

We ate our lunch with our stableman. After lunch, we took a group picture and then bid him farewell. Old Guan had to leave too; he had to return to Guiyang, the capital city of Guizhou Province, to work. He decided to head off for the Chonggu Temple. We wanted to enjoy the beauty of our natural surroundings a little longer, so we stopped at Luorong.

Accommodation arge-sized tents at the Luorong Yak Farm, 50 yuan per bed (the bed boards were not flat); visitors can also stay in the shepherds' huts for 50 yuan per person.

Dining We ate at an eatery in the pasture, 30 yuan for a bowl of soup, and 20 yuan for one dish of vegetables.

Don't miss Snake Lake, Five-colour Lake and Milk Lake — each has its own charm. As you travel from Snake Lake to Luorong, you can appreciate the extraordinary landscape created by the Shenrezig, Jambeyang and Chanadorje peaks.

14 October Luorong Pasture — Chonggu Temple

Although the temperature never climbed above -10 degrees Celsius in the autumn sunrise, dedicated travellers at Luorong Pasture like us would not miss watching daybreak over Jambeyang. Unfortunately, it was just as cloudy at the peak as the day before. So, we focused our attention on Chanadorje peak instead. Although not quite as impressive, the floating clouds passing by the mountain created an unusual spectacle.

After breakfast, we did not go out again until the sun was up over the Luorong Pasture. We had brought with us a waterproof mat to sit on, so we

1. The view of the countryside from Dulu Village.

2. Moving towards Luorong Pasture after visiting the Milk Lake and the Five-colour Lake.

could sit down at the foot the snow-capped mountains or at the sides of streams and fully immerse ourselves in our environment. We sat down and savoured the beauty of the Luorong Pasture.

Before we visited the Chonggu Temple, a shepherd in a nearby hut kindly offered us some butter tea. We then set off again, now carrying only our photographic gear, as our two large backpacks had been taken on to the temple in advance by a stableman.

At Chonggu Temple, we met a scene of great beauty, of snow-capped mountains and small streams. Everyone there was quietly waiting for sunset. Unfortunately, the weather was much worse than it had been in Luorong in the morning, and we did not see a beautiful sunset over Chanadorje that night. Luckily, we had planned to stay here one more day.

Accommodation Chonggu Temple, 40 yuan per person

Transport Horses can be rented to transport luggage from Luorong to Chonggu Temple, 50 yuan per horse

15 October Chonggu Temple — Yading Scenic Area

The highland weather was highly changeable. We hoped the sun would shine over Shenrezig and Chanadorje today.

We knew that the lakes were usually quiet before 9 a.m., and that an early start would give us the best chance to get some good shots. Unfortunately the kitchen at Chonggu Temple was short of firewood, so we had to wait until 8:30 a.m. to get some boiled water so we could prepare instant noodles. Having wasted so much time, we rushed to the Pearl Lake on horseback.

We had made a smart decision — if we had gone on foot, we would have missed the opportunity to shoot the lake while it was still and quiet, and it would have been difficult to find a good position where we could set up. The jade-green Pearl Lake is distinct from the sapphire-blue Five-colour Lake and the milky-blue Milk Lake, as it is surrounded by green trees and reflects Mt Shenrezig.

The thick clouds faded away finally, replaced by the sun, which shone down on the Chonggu Temple and the snow-capped mountains. As we walked alongside streams, we found that a lot of foreigners had come to western China to appreciate its beauty. Disappointingly, we found some food and drink packages and film boxes littered in the streams.

Dusk The sunset made up for the day before. As the moon began to climb in the sky, the sunset sank down over Chanadorje, making the mountain appear red — a sight that is not commonly seen. We took our last picture in Yading, knowing we would soon have to leave the valley.

Accommodation Longlongba Tibetan House at the entrance of the scenic area, 35 yuan per person

16 October Yading Scenic Area — Daocheng

We left the hostel just after 10 a.m., and made our way back to the entrance to the scenic area to charter a vehicle back to Daocheng about 3 driving. After arriving there,we found a clean, reasonably priced hostel. There, we washed away the grime of our eight-day journey.

At 5 p.m., we grouped together with some backpackers to charter a vehicle, so we could take some autumnal pictures by the river. The driver seemed to keep going for a long time, and we were concerned both that we would miss the sunset and that the driver would charge us too much.

Transport 200 yuan per vehicle from Yading back to Daocheng (250 yuan per vehicle from Daocheng to Yading), and 30 yuan per vehicle from Daocheng to Banghe.

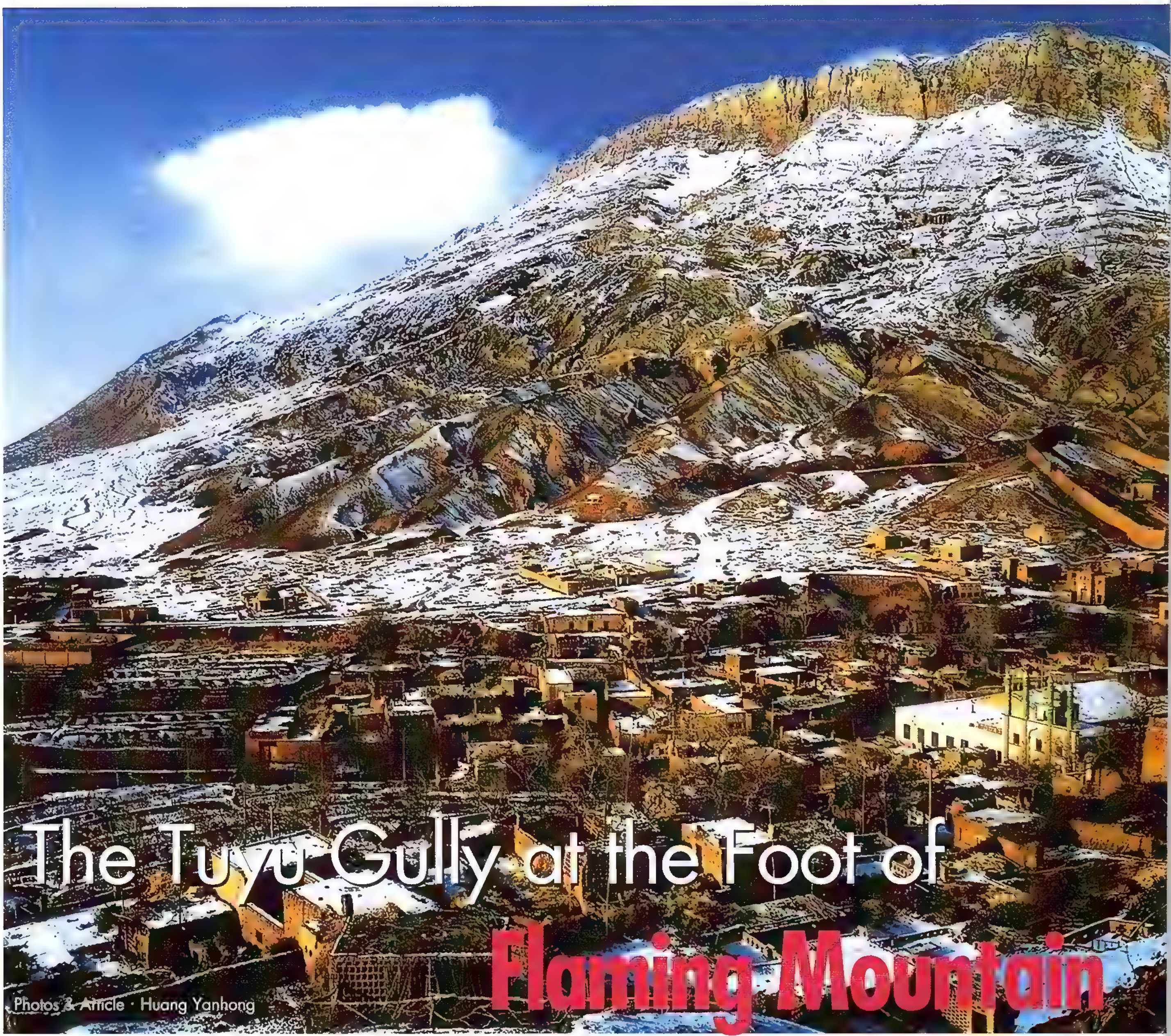
Accommodation Armed Forces Hostel, Daocheng County, 80 yuan per night, standard double room.

17 October Rubuchaka Hot Spring in Daocheng

It would be wrong to think that Yading is the only area of interest in Daocheng. There is also a thermal spring known as Rubuchaka. The water at the Rubuchaka Hot Spring is as slippery as milk; and the local scenery is very attractive, too. If the hot springs in the Hailuo Valley are the most scenic in the whole of China, then the water here may be the most slippery!

Hot Spring 10 yuan per person

Transport Chartered vehicle to the spring, 20 yuan for a round



The Tuyu Gully at the Foot of Flaming Mountain

Photos & Article · Huang Yanhong

1. Overlooking Mazha Village in Tuyu Gully from the mountaintop on the right side of Flaming Mountain. (by Huang Bin)

2. Dome-like Mazha is an iconic religious building in Tuyu Gully.

At the foot of Flaming Mountain there is a magical place. With great geographical and ecological contrasts, it is home to several ancient cultures, Buddhism and Islam, and is also home to the first Chinese who practiced Islam... This is Tuyu Gully.

An 8 km canyon, cuts its way down the Flaming Mountain range in Xinjiang. With its arid, reddish-brown landscape, it is said to be the only mountain range in China that has been carved the whole way down by a stream. The stream, running down from the Tianshan Mountain, passes the unforgiving surroundings and opens into the oasis-like Tuyu Gully. Tuyu Gully was impassable until a road was built crossing it in 1992. Indeed, the word 'Tuyu' means 'impassable.'

Entering Tuyu Gully, you'll immediately notice the sharp ecological contrasts between it and the mountains. The high ground is rough and infertile, covered with rocks, which form a natural 'firewall.' The temperature here can reach 60°C. In contrast, the lowland is lush, with a cool stream gurgling along; grapes thrive on the banks of the stream and huge ancient trees provide a dense cover for the bottom.

Sleeping on the Roof

I left the car at Mazha Village in Tuyu Gully and stayed at the first household I came to, the home to Mr. Yizibulu.

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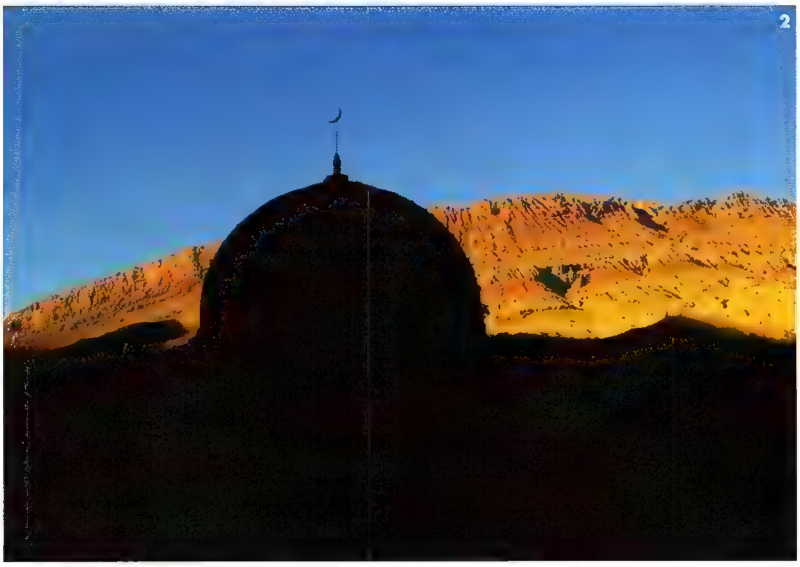
Yizibulu is in his 50s and diligently runs this hostel. He also sells souvenirs to tourists as well as and some local products, such as raisins. There are five people, including him, in his household who work in the tourism industry. His youngest son, not long ago, made a special trip to Urümqi to learn Chinese. Now his family has someone who can communicate with tourists in Chinese, helping his business.

Yizibulu asked me where I would like to sleep, either in the bedroom or on the roof. I chose the latter. His two sons joined me on the roof. Yizibulu put a thick wool felt covering and mat on the bed and offered me another thick cotton quilt. I was confused. Turpan in summer is as hot as a furnace, why would I need a heavy cotton quilt? Anyway, I was just excited about the idea of sleeping on the roof. When night fell, music from downstairs carried upward; the lights of the



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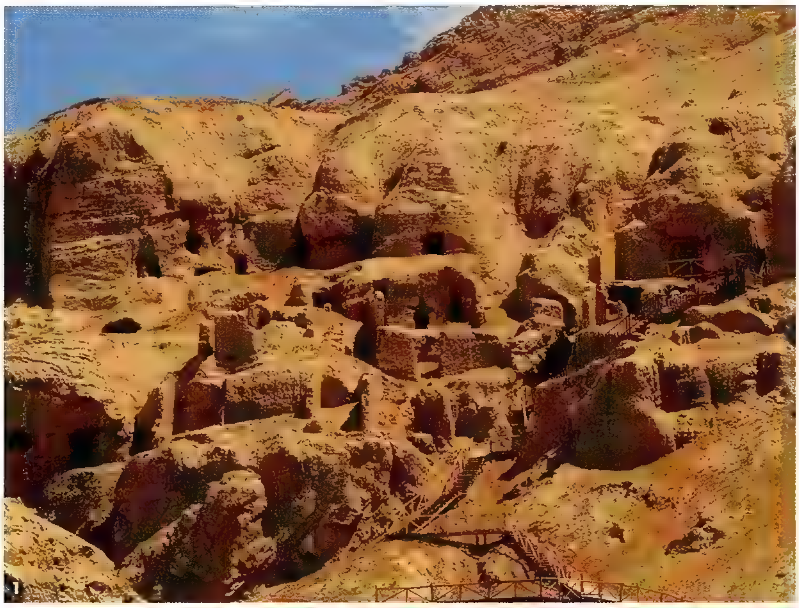
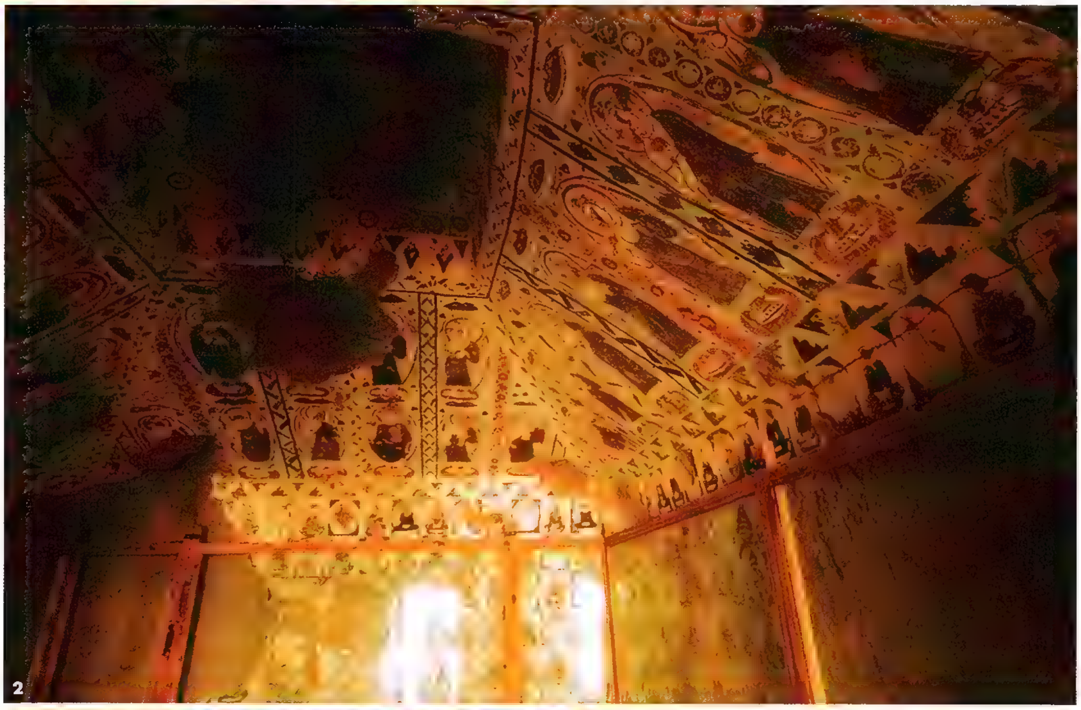


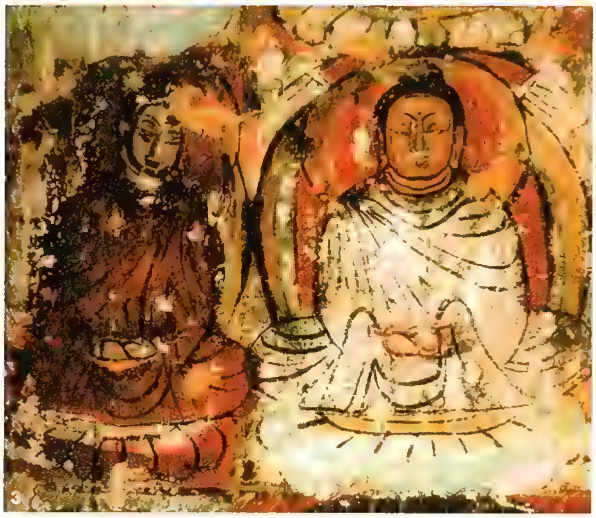
surrounding houses glimmered in unison with the faraway stars; and the moon appeared specially big and round. I lay down on the 20-plus-square metre kang (heated brick bed) and fell asleep as I stared into the immense sky.

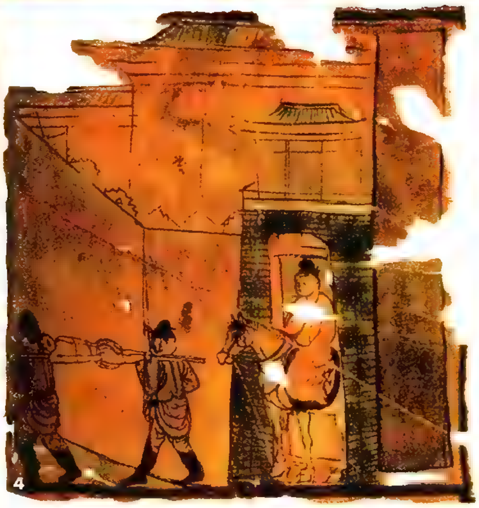
Late that night, a gust of wind woke me up. Now I understood why my host offered me such a thick quilt. But the quilt was too small for me and no matter what I did, it didn't cover my whole body. The wind blew harder, and the cold numbed my head. I got up, putting my camera bag and waist pack around my pillow to form a 'windscreen.' Thankfully it worked, and I quickly fell asleep again.

The Wonders of the Buddhist Grottoes

The 1,000-Buddha Grottoes are a key attraction for Tuyu Gully. Inside the grottoes it is quite cool, while outside is usually sizzling hot. When I got there, Ahamaiqi, a Uygur ethnic staff member of the 1,000-







1. The 1,000-Buddha Grottoes are hidden deep in Tuyu Gully and are the earliest Buddhist grottoes in Turpan.

2. The broken Buddhist murals in the 1,000-Buddha Grottoes.

3. The murals in the 1,000-Buddha Grottoes clearly show evidence of Manicheism. Bodhisattva sits on a Hu-style base instead of a lotus base. (by Huang Bin)

4. The paper painting — Prince Sakyamuni Going on a Journey unearthed from Tuyu Gully. (by Huang Bin)

5. The green dome-like building stands out among the yellow earthen graves. It has become the No. 1 symbol of Mazha Village.

6. I slept on the roof of Yizibulu's house and was chilled by the wind all night.

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Buddha Grottoes, was reading a Uygur/Chinese Travel Dialogue Dictionary on a bamboo mat. Compared to most of the villagers in Mazha Village, his Chinese was very good.

The grottoes are hidden deep in Tuyu Gully and were dug during the third century, which is earlier than the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, and, during the rise of Buddhism in Turpan, were the biggest grottoes around.

Ahamaiqi showed me the only three caves open to the public, and I was amazed by the unique murals inside. The murals portray the 16 states of mind of a mendicant's Zen meditation. There is another breathtaking find in Tuyu, the remains of Manicheism. These grottoes were originally dug out by Buddhists, and later, Manichees added their own symbols to the grottoes. One example is, in these murals Bodhisattva sits on a Hu-style base instead of the lotus-shaped base. Some experts say this is the only example of its kind in China. The Hus were the non-Han nationalities living in the north and west of China in ancient times. A Hu-style base was like a folded wooden chair covered by a cushion.

The 1,000-Buddha Grottoes are one of the three famous Buddhist grottoes in Xinjiang. Though the figures in the murals have mostly disappeared due to natural deterioration and damage by man, the artistic beauty has been retained. In grotto No. 41, Ahamaiqi turned our attention to the incisions marked on the murals. I had done some research before coming and knew that they must have been left by the German explorer, Albert von Le Coq. The Germans came to Turpan in 1902, and during their second expedition, their leader A. Grunweldel became ill, so Le Coq temporarily took

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1. A Uygur ethnic farmer and poet Abulie Tipu Maimaiti and his son.
2. Uygur women returning from Huojiamu Mazha.
3. The outer wall of an Islamic cemetery at the entrance to Tuyu Gully is also made from earth.
4. The mosque in Mazha Village sits right in the middle of the village.

over. He was a doctor and a smart, aggressive explorer with excellent language abilities.

Unlike Le Coq, Grunweldel was an archaeologist and opposed the plunder of cultural remains in the temple. He insisted on measuring and copying the murals, so that the team could replicate them when they returned to their own museum. However, Le Coq didn't listen. He took the opportunity to remove the artefacts. He even invented the dragsaw to cut out the murals. For the early 20th century, this tool was fairly advanced and it quickly cut out the murals.

The earthen house Le Coq once stayed in remains standing. Sadly, those precious cultural artefacts he stole from the grottoes vanished in the cannon fire between Soviet and Germany troops during World War II.

Visiting Islam's Biggest Cemetery

Turpan is one of the most eclectic religious places in the world. The local people believed in Buddhism, Christianity, Manicheism, Shamanism, Zoroastrianism and finally Islam, which dominates the area now. Tuyu Gully is considered Islamic holy ground in China because of Huojiamu Mazha's important status in Islam ('Mazha' means 'grave or cemetery'; Huojiamu Mazha is one of the two oldest and most famous cemeteries in Xinjiang and is one of the seven greatest Islamic holy places in the world). The cemetery is situated at the southwest entrance of the gully.

It is said that in the early seventh century, Muhammad founded Islam, soon after which Yemunaiha and four other disciples came to China to spread the message of Islam. Heading eastwards, they arrived at Tuyu Gully and saw a shepherd crying over his dying mother.

Yemunaiha examined his mother and then went outside to pray facing westward. Later, he returned with a white pill and had the shepherd's mother take it. The next afternoon, his mother recovered and was even able to cook!

This shepherd later became the first Chinese person to be converted to Islam. Yemunaiha and the other four stayed, and continued to spread the Islamic faith here. With the shepherd's help, Islam was quickly popularized in Tuyu Gully. They were all buried in Tuyu Gully. Today, on the hillside opposite Mazha Village is Huojiamu Mazha. This green dome-like building can be easily seen among the yellow earthen graves. It has become a symbol of Mazha Village.

The 8th Generation Lamplighter

Led by Mr. Ma who works for the Tuyu Gully Administrative Committee, we entered a place that has rarely been visited by Han people. After walking through a long, arched corridor, we arrived at the biggest Mazha. We saw an interesting man standing by the door, he was Yu Pu'er, a 63-year-old lamplighter. He told me, that when he was little, he always came to this Mazha with his father. After dusk and the *salat* (Muslim prayer), his father Niyazi would go to Huojiamu Mazha, strike a match and light the oil lamp. This was his father's most important job. They lit an oil lamp after sunset and blow it out after sunrise day after day.

He took over his father's sacred position, when he died several years ago. This position has been passed down from generation to generation, with Yu Pu'er being the eighth in line.

Yu Pu'er said that Mazha used to have many workers, reaching a high of 30 staff members at one time. During his father's tenure, there were only seven to eight people. The work was divided very clearly between the staff. One lit the oil lamp, one was in charge of the income and one chanted scriptures. In the past, Mazha had its own grape fields which were taken care of by the people who worked there, and the income was used to help the poor.

Mr. Ma said Ajimu who is in charge of Mazha uses a stick to 'poke' people. The people 'poked' by him believe this 'magic stick' can cure disease. Some of them even carry dirt back home and make tea out of it, because they believe it can also rid them of disease. Now, there are four workers in Mazha and their yearly

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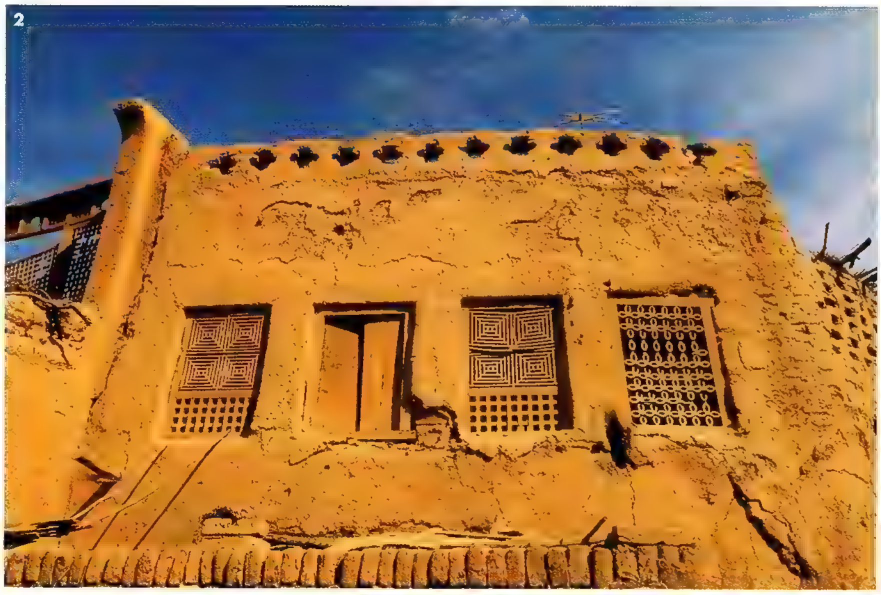
salary is 1,000 yuan, which is paid by the village. The entrance ticket (20 yuan) goes to the village and the donations from pilgrims is used to renovate the cemetery. However, 1,000 yuan is too little to live on. Yu Pu'er told us he has a vineyard on which his sons help out. The vineyard's yearly income comes in at about 20,000 yuan. He has five sons and 17 grandchildren, and every Friday they all come together and pray. Since he made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 2004, he has devoted himself to Allah and given up all forms of entertainment.

Age-old Earthen Houses

Mazha Village is a very rustic place, with its houses made of yellow clay. The uniquely styled yellow clay house is one of Turpan's three treasures (along with Kaner Well and grapes). Some stand alone and some are connected with others, some are single-storey, some two-storey, while some have arched corridors. These houses are the best preserved and oldest clay buildings in China.

It is recorded that the local villagers started to build houses using the yellow clay, about 1,400 years ago during the Tang dynasty. They first used a *kantuman* (a digging tool) to dig out clay for the walls, followed by building the roofs and dividing the house into several rooms. The clay houses are usually cool in summer and warm in winter, which is very suitable for the dry weather in the basin-like Turpan.

The Tuyu villagers' granary is also made of yellow clay. Grain can be kept in it for about 20 years without going bad. In addition, they have yellow clay cellars.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They are usually square, and about two meters deep. In the past, villagers didn't have fans or air-conditioning, therefore, the cellar was the place to go to avoid the summer heat.

The carpenter Ku'erban's house is also made of clay. He is very hospitable and straightforward and can speak some simple Chinese. He told me his house had been in the family for several generations.

He works at home under the grape trellis as it provides cool shade and fresh grapes that he can eat at any time.

Tasty Tuyu Gully Raisins

The villagers have turned Tuyu Gully into a grape paradise. The vineyards are managed in a natural and organic way. Ku'erban said the yellowish red soil is perfect for Thomson Seedless (a kind of seedless white grape). For thousands of years, the gully villagers have grown Turpan Thomson Seedless grapes. Every year before winter, Ku'erban and other villagers bury the grape roots so as to avoid the severe effects of the cold. When spring comes, they dig them out and let them grow along the trellis.

When I arrived in Tuyu Gully, it was grape harvest time. One early morning, Ku'erban and his sons drove their tractor to the vineyard, and returned in the afternoon with heaps of harvested grapes. The majority of the grapes are sent to the drying room and they keep a very small amount for themselves. The drying room is a common sight in Tuyu. It's built on a roof or a slope, and only used to dry grapes. The walls of the drying room have many holes for ventilation. It takes a month for fresh grapes to be dried into tasty raisins using these special rooms. The biggest expense for the grape growers is water. Ku'erban's family needs to pay 80 yuan each month to irrigate the vineyards. The water comes from the snow on Tianshan Mountain. It has kept the foot of Flaming Mountain alive with greenery for hundreds of years.

Cultural Mix

Later, I went to Xiahemailisi Village outside Tuyu Gully with Huang Bin, one of the top photographers in Turpan.

Huang Bin told me that the Uygur people in the village look similar to ethnic Han people. It might be because the local people here married the Han ethnic soldiers or the merchants who passed along the Silk Road. The women here are very pretty and looked different than the pure-blood Uygur women.

There was one woman who was counting Buddhist beads while we were taking pictures. But Huang Bin said the locals denied this was evidence of Buddhist influence because they believed in Islam.

Translated by Nicole Ouyang

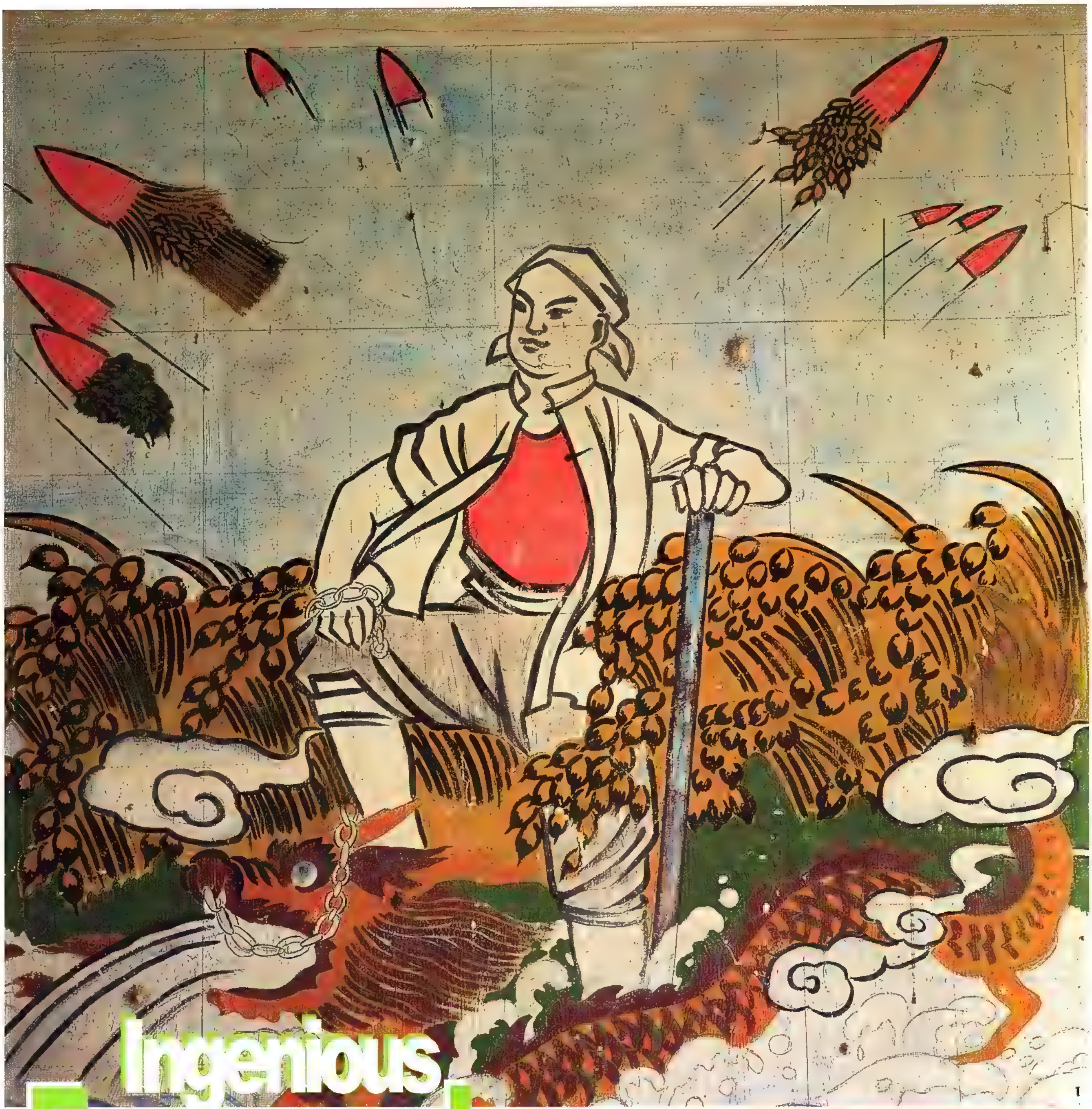
1. A Uygur Woman is counting Buddhist beads, but locals say this is not evidence of Buddhist influence.

2. A beautiful earthen building with unique window ornaments.

3. Many villagers' houses have *hudui* (a pair of vertical or horizontal stone blocks in front of the door).

4. The *kang* beside the door is also made of earth.

5. A Uygur family in Xiahemailisi Village outside Tuyu Gully.



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Ingenious Farmers' Drawings

Article · Chan Yat Nin

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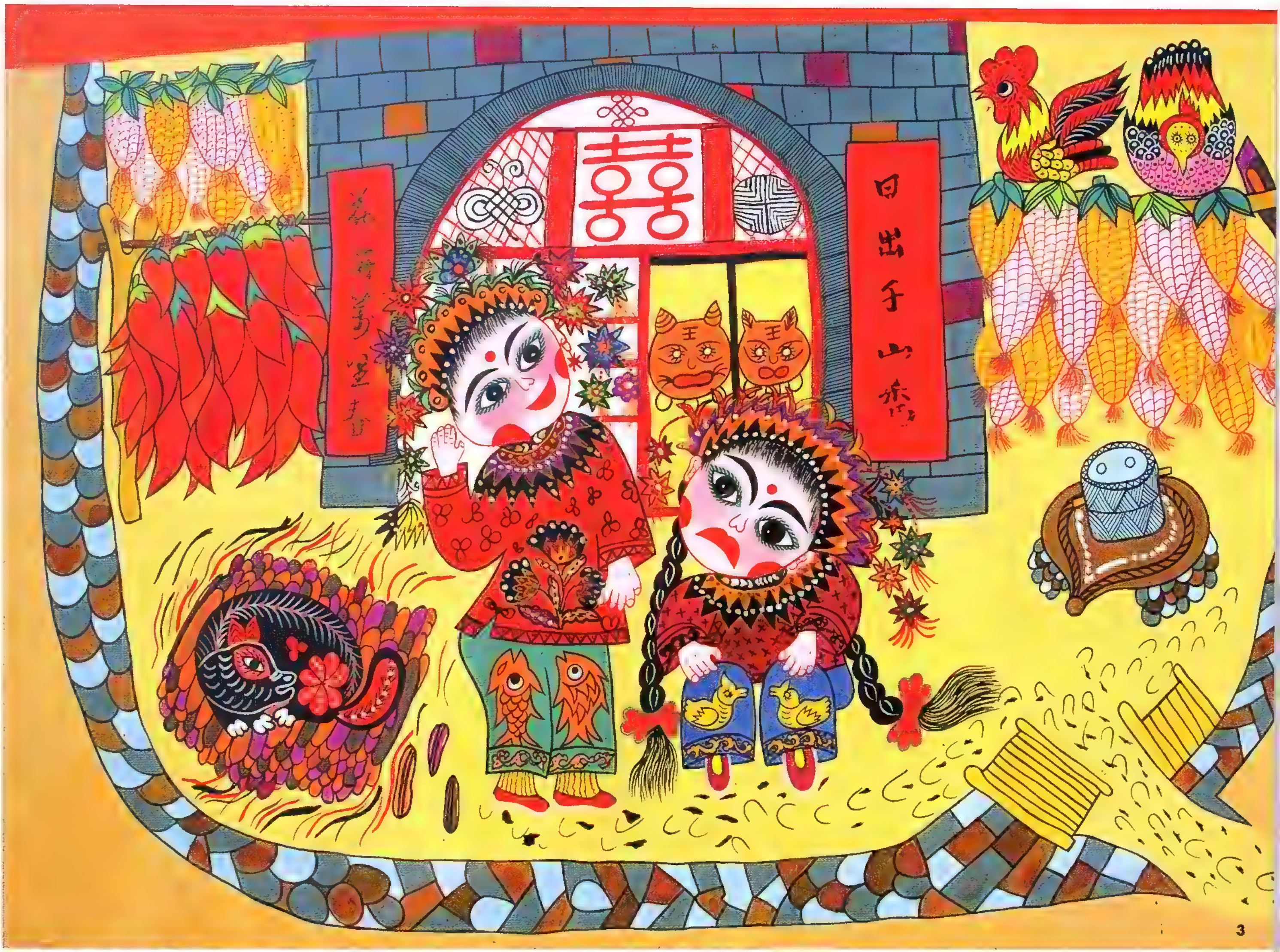
The drawings of Chinese farmers have become famous in recent years. As their works become increasingly popular among collectors, many farmer painters have been invited to highbrow art galleries or exhibitions abroad.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Unique Style Creates Popularity

It's only been three decades since the term 'farmer's drawing' was coined. The new found popularity of these drawings, however, belies the fact that Chinese farmers have been drawing since ancient times. It has always been a way to beautify their lives — dyed fabrics and embroidery enliven their clothes, and drawings, paper-cuts, carvings and sculptures decorate their homes. They also embody good wishes and dreams in their works. Although the farmers could simply buy these type of products from skilled artisans, their strong tradition of self-sufficiency has pushed them to be creative themselves.

Drawing is a fairly easy way to express oneself, as it requires no great skills, only imagination. Among the numerous works by farmers, paintings of door-gods, living room murals, Spring Festival paintings, drawings on the walls around the bed, and portraits of the kitchen god are most commonly seen in rural houses.

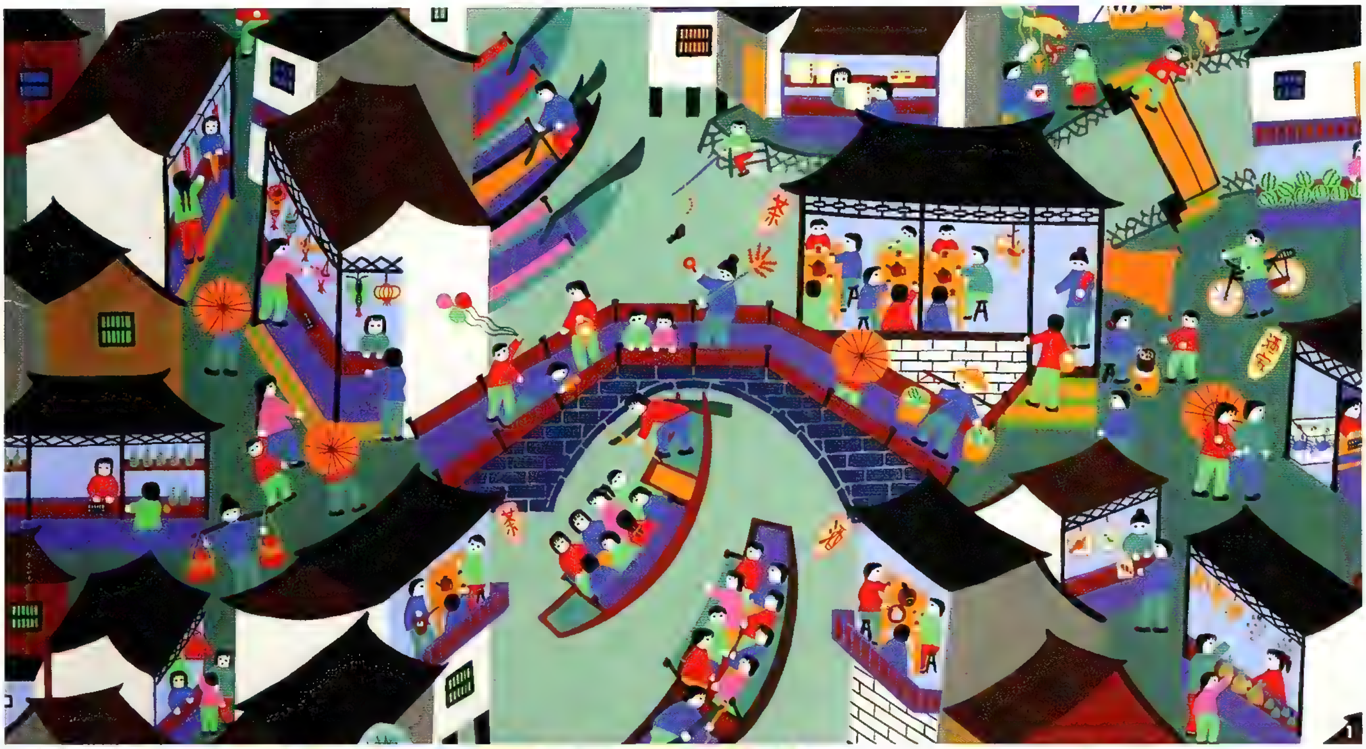
Today, as farmers worship deities less, their

1.In the late 1950s, the 'Great Leap Forward'movement came to rural China. This painting wished that bumper harvests of grains would come as fast as launched rockets.

2. Traditional decorative drawings on the walls around the *kang* (brick bed) in Wubei, Shanxi. Auspicious patterns and legendary stories are the most common. (by Li Anbao)

3. *Waiting for My Lover* by Li Fu'ai, Ansai, 2006: The painting depicts the girl's joy and eagerness in waiting for her lover. The patterns on her clothes reveal her cheerful mood. Although the perspective may not be right, it is very vivid.

4. A contest of women painters in celebration of the Spring Festival in Ansai, north Shaanxi. (by Ma Yiu Chun)



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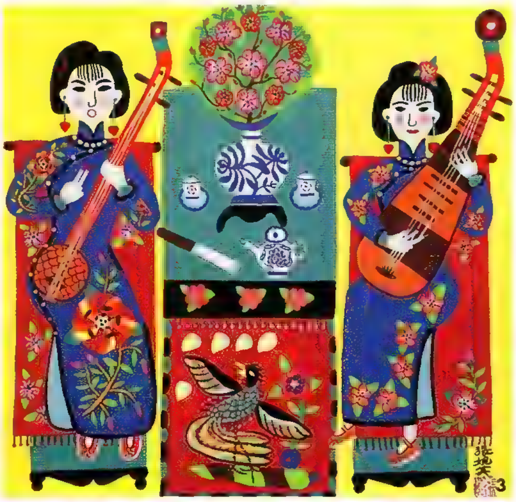
paintings more often reflect their own life and aspirations for a better life. This aspect, and their unique style, make the drawings more appealing to outsiders. In the 1970s, many professional artists were impressed by the farmers' extraordinary imagination and outstanding form of expression. So they went to the villages and offered guidance to the farmers to improve their skills, while simultaneously absorbing the novel style themselves. Also, thanks to the support of local art organizations — cultural centres of counties, towns and villages — the reputation of the 'farmers' drawings' from these places spread fast. The best known among them are Huxian, Fengxiang and Ansai of Shaanxi Province, Jinshan of Shanghai, Longhai of Fujian Province, Tonggu and Gedong of Guizhou Province, Shengsi of Zhejiang Province, and Longmen of Guangdong Province.



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1. *Small Town* by Zhao Longguan, Jinshan, 1990s: This is a typical town in south China, where a river runs under bridges and by the dwellings. The white walls and black tiled roofs are a cachet of southern architecture, but here the bright colours add energy to the picture.

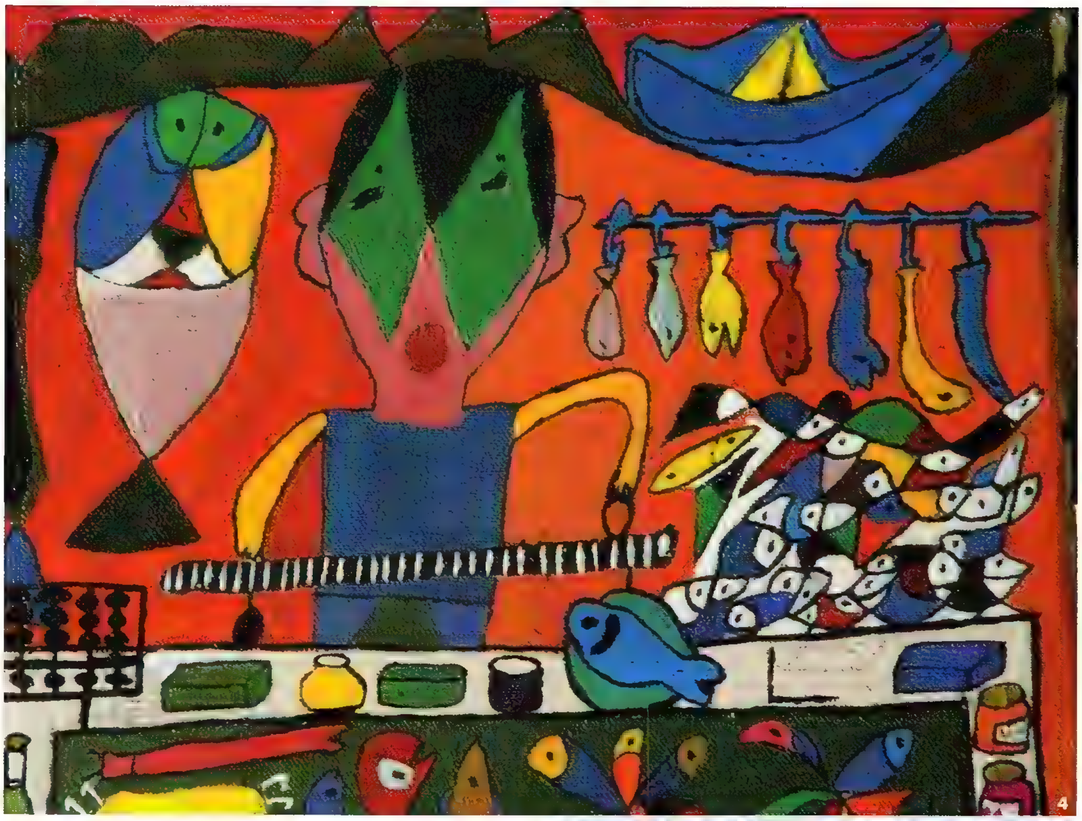
2. *Life of Farmers* by Lu Yongzhong, Jinshan, 1990s: A 15-metre-long scroll, with some 5,000 characters, depicts seasonal scenes of an old town. The arrangement of the various festival activities and life scenes is done in an orderly fashion. (by Chan Yat Nin)

3. *Xiang Yin* (Hometown Music) by Zhang Wanying, Jinshan, 1990s: The painting shows pingtan, a popular entertainment in south China. The symmetrical composition and one-dimensional chairs and table are decorative.

4. *Selling Fish*, from Shengsi. The colours do not reflect reality, but are combined freely to create contrast. The personified fish and the 'fishified' vendor are very vivid.

5. *Fishpond* by Zhang Meiling, Jinshan, early 21st century: This lively scene depicts women in the centre feeding the fish, which swarm from all directions. The ripples in particular add vitality to the pond.

6. *Drawing the Net*, a farmer drawing from Shengsi.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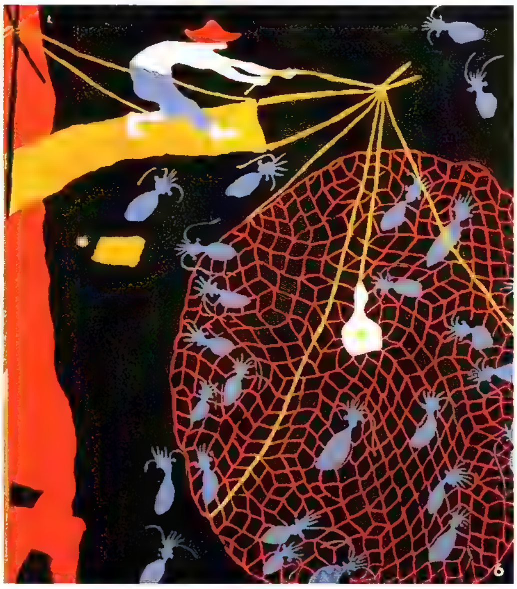
Diverse Styles

In general, Chinese farmer painters all like painting familiar aspects of their hometown and daily life, which lends their drawings a distinct countryside flavour. With hardly any training, they work free from the rules of perspective, proportion, or colour. They just draw as they like, from the heart. Their simple vision and bold method of expression also reveal an unconstrained, remarkable imagination.

Not all farmers' drawings are of the same style. Their different locations, living conditions, customs and cultural backgrounds mean that their styles also vary. On the Loess Plateau, the women are the main painters. With a background of needlecraft and paper-cut skills, they paint with bold lines and an unsophisticated style that reveals the unhindered imagination of the Loess Plateau dwellers.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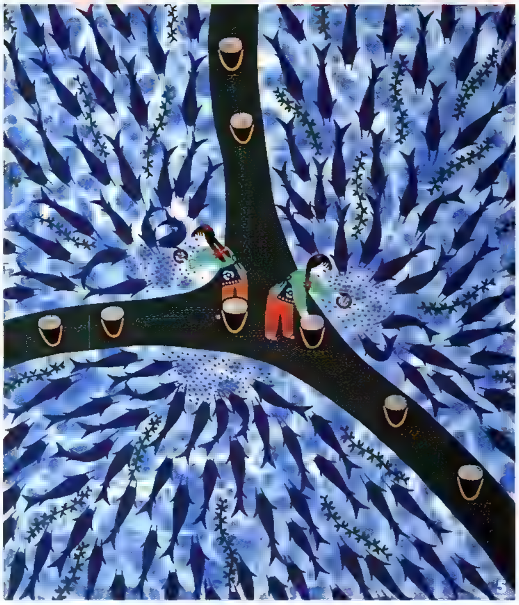
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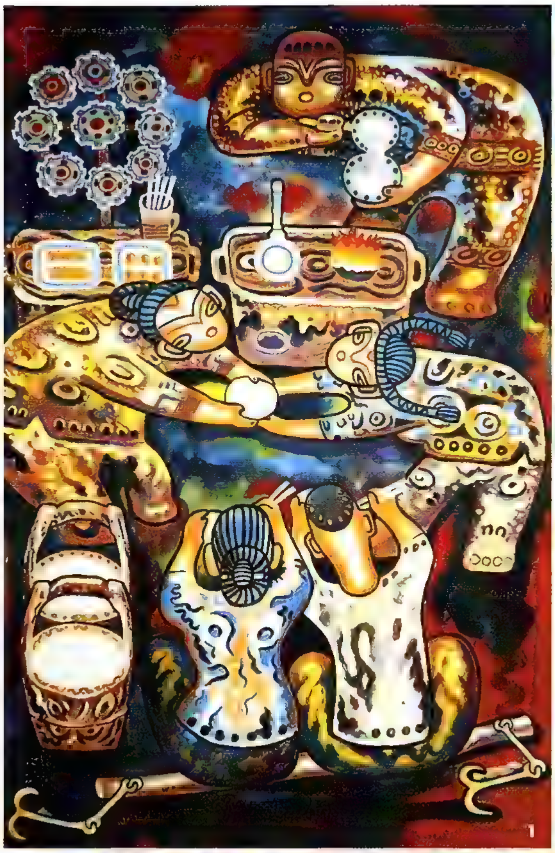
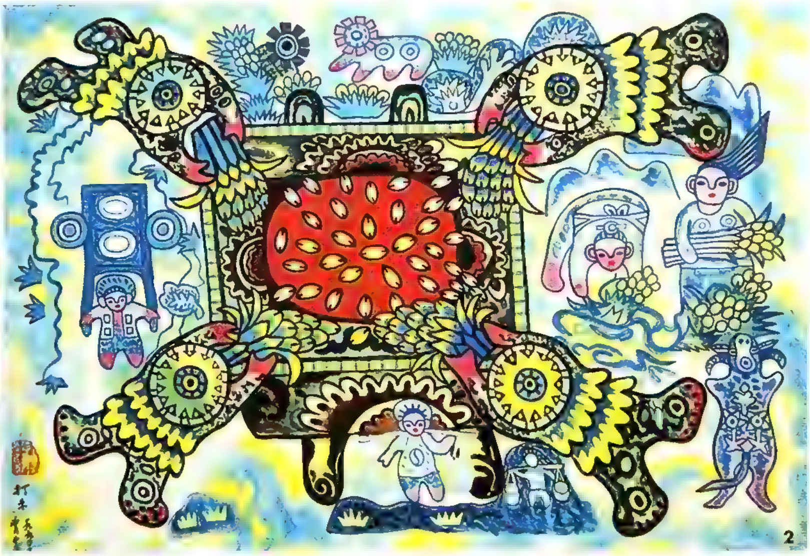
Women are also the main painters in Jinshan, in south suburban Shanghai. Vividly portraying life in the areas south of the Yangtze River, their fine exquisite works are carefully conceived compositions and highly decorative.

Works from Shengsi, also in South China, are quite different from Jinshan as the fisherfolk painters



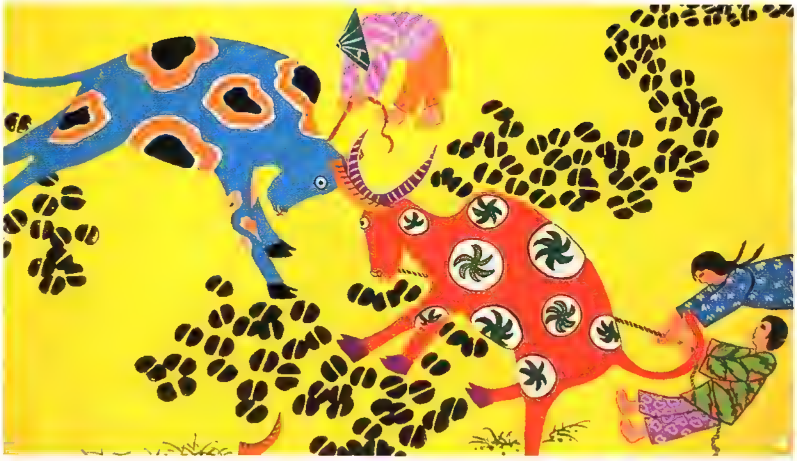


mainly focus on fishing. They paint with bold lines, and strong and bright colours, creating simple, abstract and modern works.

Longmen County in the mountains in northeastern Guangdong is the home of a compact community of Hakka people. It's no wonder that the farmers' drawings here most often record the lives of its own

1. *Selling Congee in Early Morning* by Wang Hanchi, Longmen, 1990s.

2. *Threshing Ground* by Zeng Baotian, Longmen, 1990: This painting portrays two common aspects of Cantonese life: the aroma of breakfast congee and the fruits stored by the grain buckets.



people. Passionate and realistic, many painters also adopt the Western painting method of adding a three-dimensional effect to their unconventional works.

The drawings of the Miao villagers in Tonggu reflect typical features of southwestern mountainous Guizhou. Being very fond of embroidery and batik, the Miao people often embroider symbols of their origin on their clothes and also use embroidery and batik patterns in their drawings. Their understanding of nature adds mystery to their artistic works.

Translated by Julia Han

3. Colourful baskets, now beautiful and interesting decorations of the Buyei people of Xiangganggou, in suburban Guiyang. (by Liu Lei)

4. *Ox Fight*, from Zhangzhou: In a depiction of village life, these two brightly coloured oxen are creatively painted out of perspective and in a style that simulates flying.

5. A painting contest of Miao residents of Tonggu, Guizhou. (by Huo Wei)

6. *Making Hemp Rope* from Zhangzhou.

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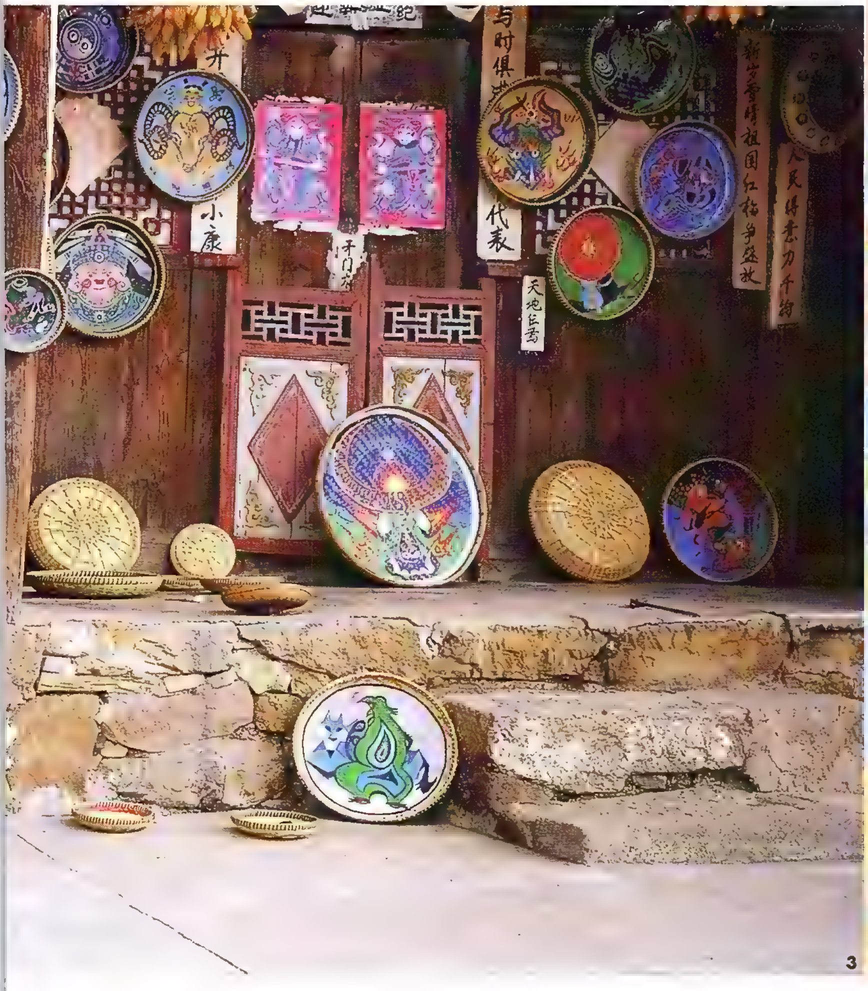

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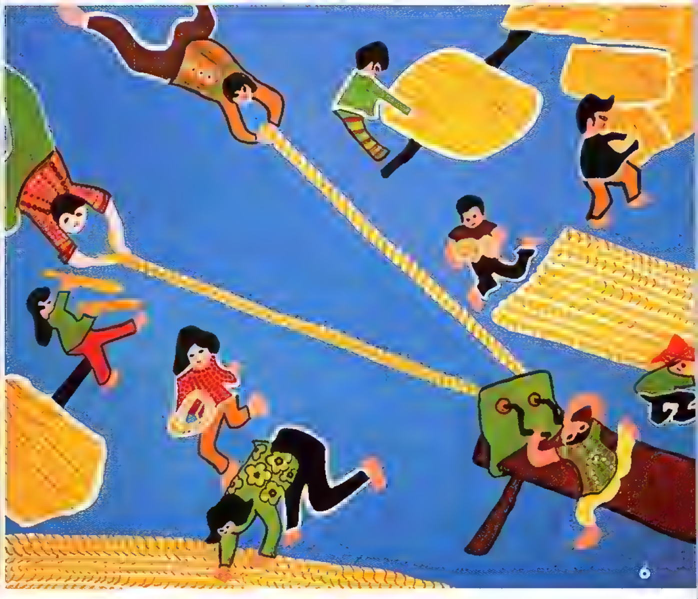

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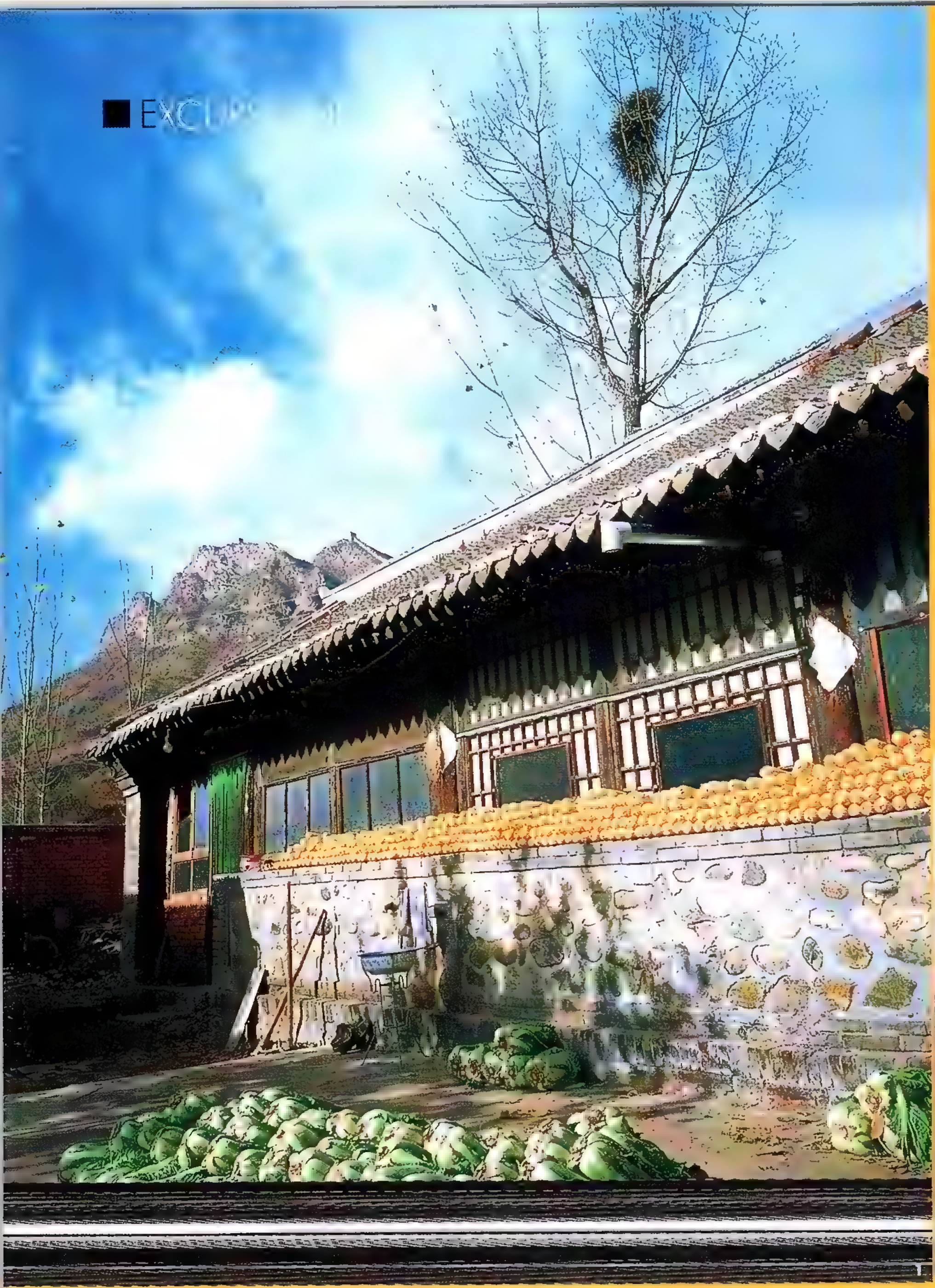
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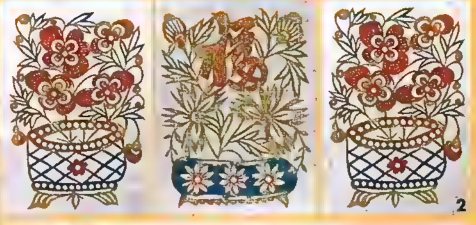
Hexi Village, Gubeikou Township is located in Miyun County at the foot of the Great Wall, northeast of Beijing City proper. Far from Beijing's Fifth Ring Road and free from the noise and air pollution of the city, the village is a haven on the outskirts of Beijing. I made up my mind to escape city life by fleeing to the suburbs.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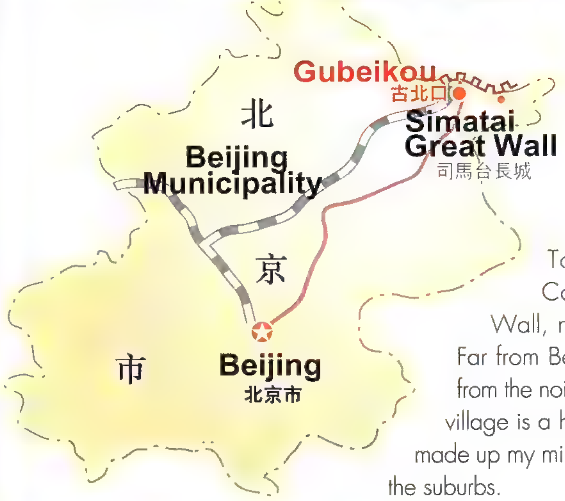
Charms of Beijing's Outskirts

Photos · Yu Qiong

Article · Florence Chan



Hexi Village, Gubeikou Township is located in Miyun County at the foot of the Great Wall, northeast of Beijing City proper. Far from Beijing's Fifth Ring Road and free from the noise and air pollution of the city, the village is a haven on the outskirts of Beijing. I made up my mind to escape city life by fleeing to the suburbs.

Rustic Village Life

Hexi (meaning 'West of River') is a small village next to the Great Wall. Located on the frontier, it has weathered 138 battles during its existence and the villagers are all descendents of soldiers or builders of the Great Wall. Some of the houses were even built with bricks from the Great Wall.

The village houses, no more than two stories high, are sparsely scattered amongst trees. Every family has a courtyard that is surrounded by crops during spring and summer. It was mid autumn when I was there, so all the fields had been harvested and the courtyards were piled high with Chinese cabbage. After drying in the sun, they are stored in cellars to be used throughout the winter months.

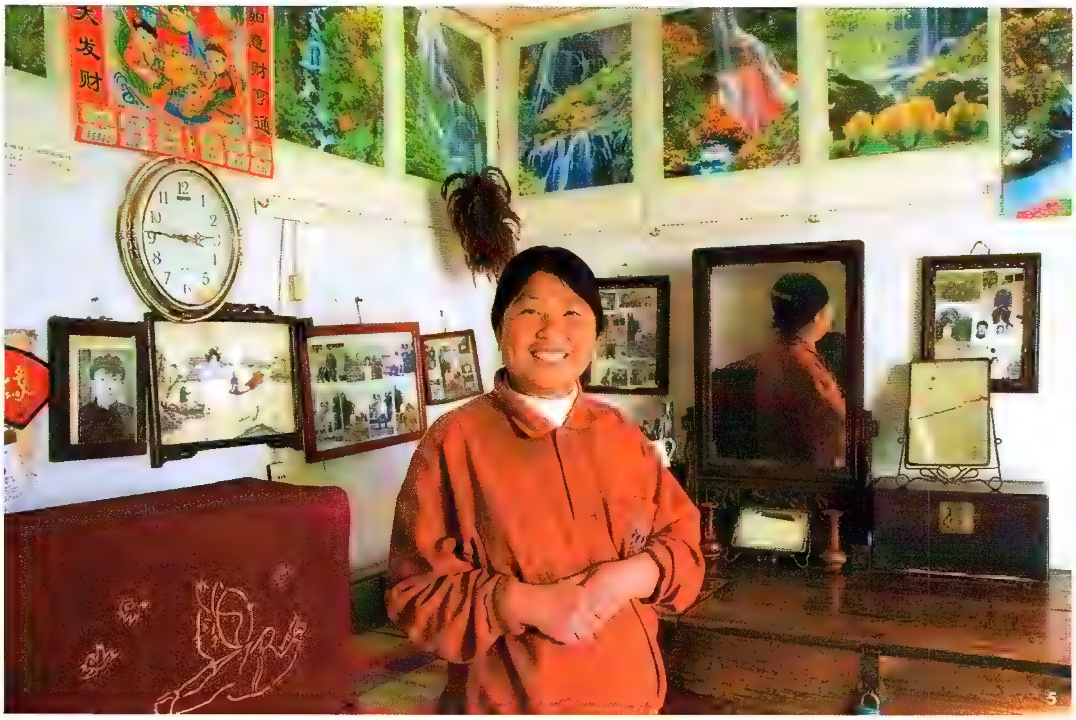
Seeing visitors, the villagers greeted us warmly by handing us tea and water, and someone even presented me with a lovely red juicy apple. I still remember that the apple had that special aroma that only fresh apples have. It was so sweet and juicy that it looked as if it had just been plucked from the tree. I was told that it was in fact picked in May and had been kept in a 'cellar' — a hole dug into the ground to preserve food. I thought that only refrigerators could preserve food and it was the first time I had seen such a place that could keep an apple so fresh and juicy even after six months. In this small village I was so ignorant that I was amazed at even the most ordinary things.

A Simple Family Hostel

What made me happiest was that here in Gubeikou no one treats you like a tourist. As it is not a tourist draw, no entrance ticket is required; there are no hotels and no hawkers. Everyone eats at home, so the village has no restaurants. We stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Xu who run a family hostel, which is no more than a couple of extra bedrooms for guests. The Xus have kept many old black-and-white photos in the room, matched by an old dresser with rusty stains speaking of past stories. The dresser's mirror, showing only blurred images, is old enough to be considered an antique. Nowadays radios are no more than hand size, but this radio here is at least 80 cm long, and still works. The wall is decorated with calendar pictures of the last century, and the bedspread and quilt cover are decorated with colourful kylin and red flower motifs. What is most striking is the window — pasted with paper in the same style as what we Chinese saw from historical TV dramas. The paper-cuts were roughly made yet look intimate, appearing to have been done by the family itself.

I was also surprised to see paper-cuts of chickens and scissors on the wall and wondered why such plain patterns were used as decoration. Mrs. Xu said, 'on *Jingzhe* (Waking of Insects Day, which usually falls on 5, 6, or 7 March), when all insects wake up and emerge from the ground, they will be eaten by chickens or caught by scissors.'

Mr. Xu and his family are simple people with an equally simple lifestyle. Although they have run the family hostel for years, they have not changed our guest room one little bit, but have kept it as it must have been used in real village life. Staying in such a room, we felt very much at home, and this is perhaps what



1. Chinese cabbages are placed in the courtyard after harvest in deep autumn.

2. Paper-pasted windows are hard to find as the paper is easily damaged and needs changing once or twice a year.

3. Featuring red flowers and phoenixes, local bedspreads are full of earthy rustic flavour.

4. Breakfast in Gubeikou — scallions and other vegetables wrapped in thin pancake.

5. The smiling Mrs. Xu and the homey furniture make me feel at home. (by Florence Chan)

1

makes the family hostel tick. No wonder the Xus have so many guests and their wall is full of postcards from Germany, Taiwan and other parts of the world.

The True Flavour of Life

I enjoyed the farmers' food during my stay at Gubeikou. In China's rural villages the most nutritious and tasty chickens are known as 'free-range chickens' *(zou di ji)*, but it rare these days to be able to taste such fare. Fortunately, I was able to eat such delicious local family dishes such as this everyday to my heart's content. The villagers told me that the water from their wells tastes sweet, much better than tap water and that boiled dumplings made by hand are much tastier than those made by machine, because the hand can pass on feelings, so any food cooked from the heart must taste better. In contrast, dumpling skins produced by machine have no warmth. Suddenly, I felt if I have first learnt the true meaning of 'delicious'.

In my childhood I often read storybooks with pictures of the starry night, but as I grew up in the city such pictures always seemed unreal. Tonight under a clear sky, I saw stars much nearer and clearer than I had ever had before, dotted all over the sky. So this was the true picture of starry night!

We awoke at sunrise and turned in at sunset, and slept on a *kang*. A *kang* is a bed which is hollow inside and connected to a stove in the kitchen. Every evening we cooked dinner, and the heat and smoke from the stove would pass through the flue in the *kang*, making it warm throughout the night, even at such a cold night of no more than 5°C. I had to marvel at the villagers' clever design — keeping warm in such an environmentally friendly way!

The Wild Beauty of the Great Wall

I got up at five early next morning when it was still pitch-black. A friend and I went to a villager's home for some newly boiled warm soybean milk skins. With nothing added to it, we experienced the unadulterated fragrance of pure soybeans. I realized that urban people are so used to adding things to food and don't know how to appreciate the original flavour of food. After breakfast, the sky began to turn dark blue against which the triangular roofs and the bare tree branches looked perfectly harmonious. Amid cock-a-doodle-doos and dogs' barks, I breathed in deeply the cool and clear air — what a pleasant morning.

We climbed a section of the Great Wall. Needing no ticket, we could climb whenever and wherever we pleased. The Great Wall at Gubeikou is not very high, but standing on it I had a bird's eye view of the whole town — a scene of peace and

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serenity, with smoke twirling up from every chimney. The villagers must be cooking breakfast. The ancient wall here is weather-beaten and dilapidated, and some parts lie in ruins, virtually blending in with the fields and grass. The wilderness is in such a sharp contrast with the crowds at the Badaling Great Wall, compared with which, I appreciate the wild Great Wall much more.

Climbing the Wall Before Dawn

The Simatai Great Wall is not far from Gubeikou and so we went there to watch the sunset. With no other tourists around, I closed my eyes, caressed by a gentle breeze and the setting sun. The sky was like a palette, layered richly with colours — purple, red, blue, yellow, orange, and white. It was already completely dark when we left the wall. The setting sun was simply stunning, so we decided to come back to the Wall again before dawn to await the sunrise.

At three in the morning, we left our warm quilts and were out in the freezing cold. The Simatai Great Wall looked as peaceful as a sleeping beauty in the gentle moonlight. I could only make out its silhouette in the distance. At this moment the Great Wall looked less angular, and I could see another kind of beauty, a deeper and more substantial kind. Step by step, we climbed to the top, sweating profusely, until we reached No. 12 Watchtower — the Tower of the General, to wait for sunrise. But Simatai's sunrise is no match for its sunset: a high mountain on the eastern side blocks its path. Rising above this mountain, the sun was no longer the 'salty duck yolk' we had imagined.

We took a train back. I saw the Great Wall here and there on the hills along the way. The trees along the road had lost almost all their leaves except for a few yellow ones, and I savoured slowly the wild charms of Beijing's suburbs.

Translated by L. Yu

Travel Tips

Transportation

To Gubeikou: Take a four-hour train from Xizhimen Railway Station to Gubeikou at 10-12 yuan per ticket. Or take an air-conditioned special bus from Dongzhimen to Miyun County Town, then change to a minibus to Gubeikou and get off before the Gubeikou Tunnel. Or take a long-distance bus to Chengde, Weichang, Fengning at 10 yuan per ticket.

To Simatai: Take tourist bus No. 12 at Dongsi Shitiao or Xuanwumen.

From Gubeikou to Simatai: Take a taxi for 30 to 40 yuan, as there is no regular bus.

Accommodation

Mr Xu's Family Hostel Add. Hexi Village, Gubeikou Township, Miyun County, Beijing;Tel: (10) 8105 1548;Rate: 30 yuan a day, including board and room

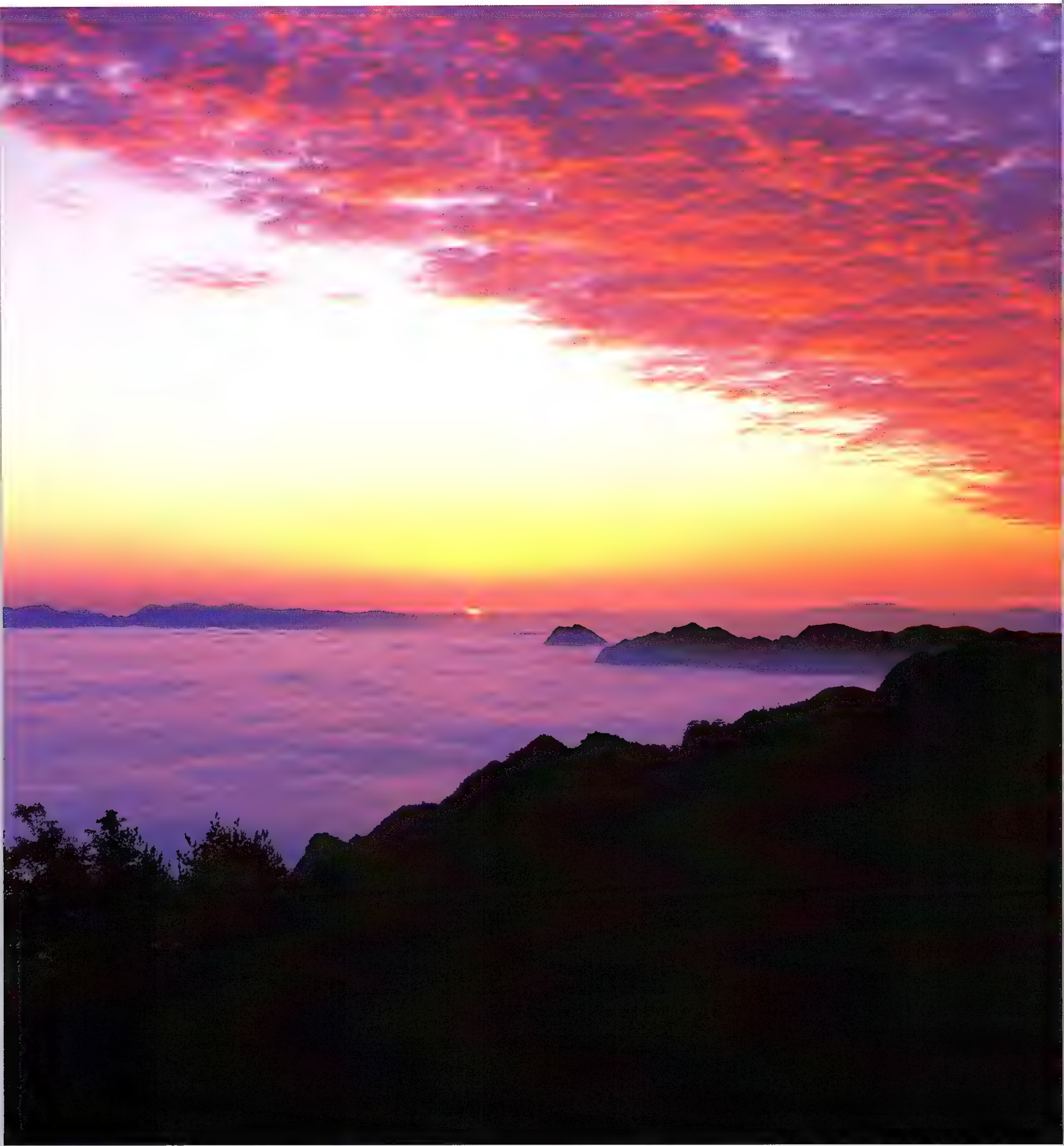
Simatai International Youth Hostel Add. Simatai Great Wall, Miyun County, Beijing;Tel: (10) 6903 5311;Rate: 260 yuan/ standard room; 280 yuan/ room for three

1. Wanshou Xinggong (Longevity Palace) at the foot of the Gubeikou Great Wall mainly accommodates tourists.

2. Hexi Village in Gubeikou Town is a peaceful place on Beijing's fringes.

3. Like an artist's palette, Simatai is quite beautiful at dusk.

4. The Gubeikou Railway Station.



Sunrise at Yanhu (Wild Goose Lake). (by Zhou Mingfa)

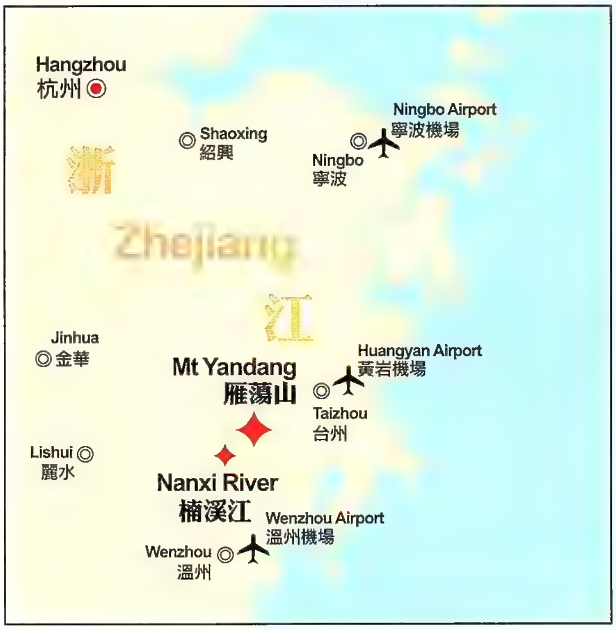
Landscapes:

Mt Yandang to the Nanxi River

Photos & Article • Huang Yanhong, Zhou Mingfa et al

Mt Yandang's perennial beauty has attracted numerous travellers and photographers to sketch its landscape in three dimensions — written words, speech and pictures. This time-honoured tourist attraction, stands near the seaside in Wenzhou City, in East China's southern Zhejiang Province.

From the ancient villages and towns scattered along the heaven-sent beauty of the Nanxi River, near to Mt Yandang, we can appreciate the cultural richness and pastoral warmness of this locality.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Mt Yandang
雁蕩山
Huangyan Airport
黃岩機場
Taizhou
台州
Lishui
麗水
Nanxi River
楠溪江
Wenzhou Airport
溫州機場
Wenzhou
溫州

Photographing Mt Yandang

Photos & Text • Zhou Mingfa

The unique aesthetic perspective and painstaking patience of different photographers can result in a variety of landscape photos with unexpected beauty. The following tips will help you catch the soul of Mt Yandang.

Shuangsun Peak

In the Lingfeng Peak Scenic Area, two towering rocks greet the eyes first. They resemble two bamboo shoots popping up after a spring rain, hence the name Shuangsun (Double-Bamboo) Peak.

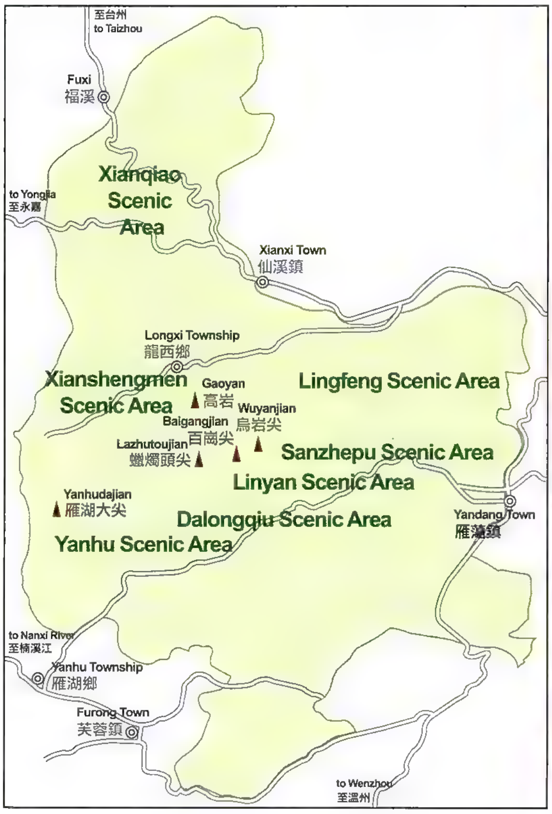
Transport: There is a small bridge some 20 metres from the right side of the Lingfeng car park. The stream under the bridge provides an ideal place to photograph the Double Bamboo Shoots.

Photography: Around 7 a.m. on a clear sunny day after a heavy rainfall in the rainy season, the Double Bamboo Shoots are reflected in the tranquil water, providing the best scene for photography.

Reminder: Many local residents often wash clothes in the stream in the early morning. You may politely ask them to do their washing under the bridge, and thereby avoid the ripples that may affect the picture quality.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/8 second

Best time: May and June, especially after a heavy rainfall.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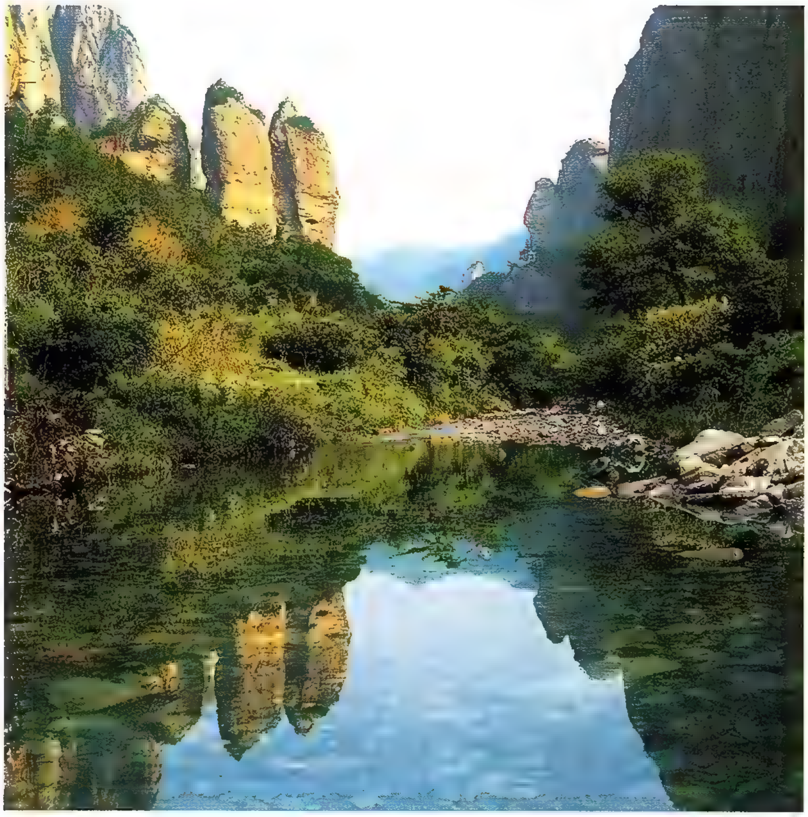
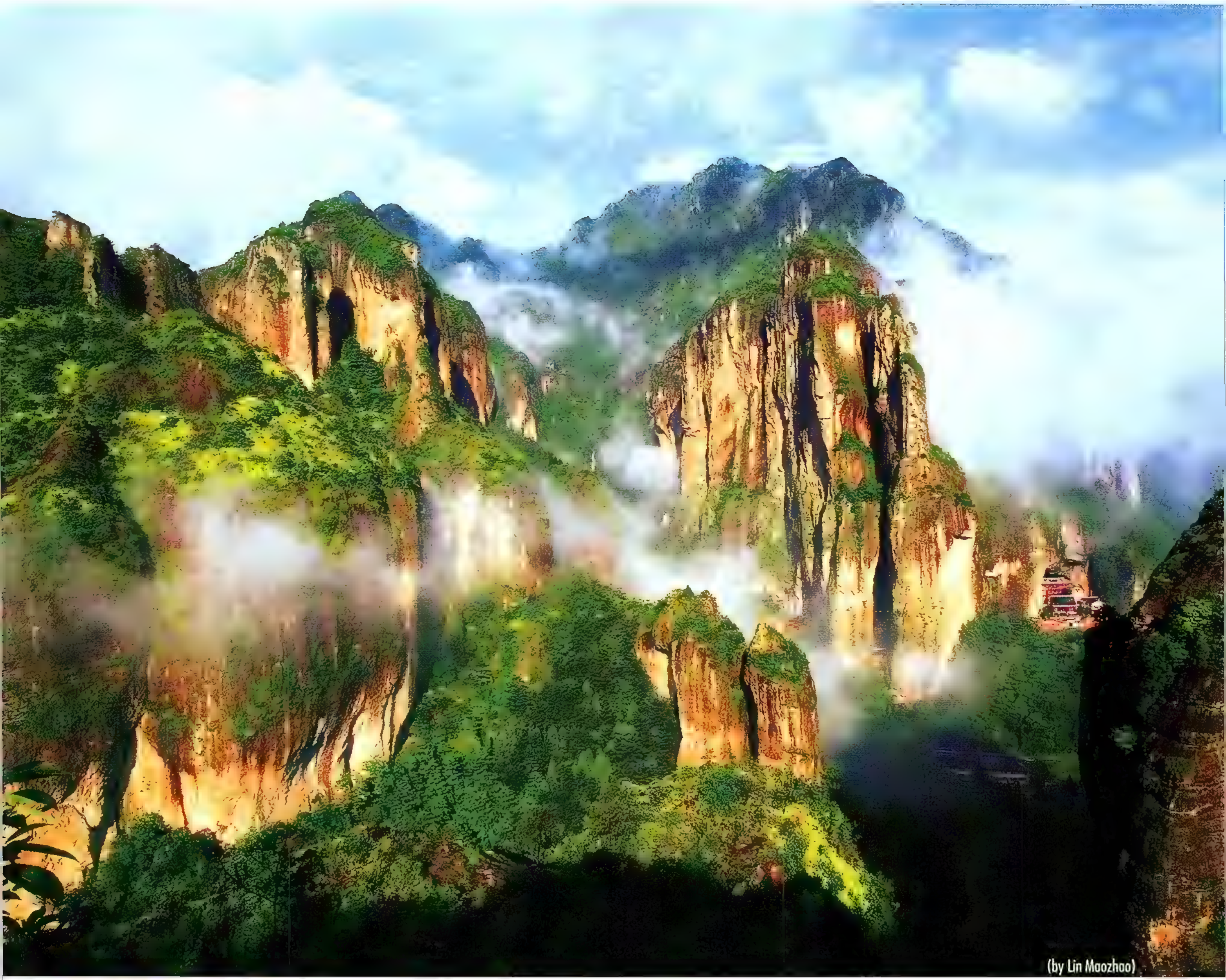
to Yongjia
至永嘉
Xianqiao Scenic Area
Xianxi Town
仙溪鎮
Longxi Township
龍西鄉
Xianshengmen Scenic Area
Gaoyan
高岩
Lingfeng Scenic Area
Wuyanjian
烏岩尖
Baigangjian
百崗尖
Lazhutoujian
蠟燭頭尖
Sanzhepu Scenic Area
Linyan Scenic Area
Yanhudajian
雁湖大尖
Dalongqiu Scenic Area
Yandang Town
雁蕩鎮
Yanhu Scenic Area
to Nanxi River
至楠溪江
Yanhu Township
雁湖鄉
Furong Town
芙蓉鎮
to Wenzhou
至溫州





(by Lin Maozhao)

Lingfeng Peak

Mt Yandang is divided into seven scenic areas, with Lingfeng (Spiritual Peak) being its eastern gate. Lingfeng joins Lingyan (Spiritual Crag) and Dalongqiu (Great Dragon Waterfall) to become the 'three wonders' of Mt Yandang. Craggy peaks with murmuring streams winding through them create the fantastic scenery above the Mingyu Brook.

Transport: Visitors from both Hangzhou in the north and Wenzhou in the south should get off the expressway at the Yandang exit and then take a bus to the Lingfeng carpark at Mt Yandang. Walk one kilometre on the right-hand route to reach the Xiegongling path on the left, and 500 metres further along, you will have a full view of the Spiritual Peak.

Photography: Both spring and autumn have proved to be a good time to photograph the peak. In spring, bathed in the sun, the peak has a clear gradation, while in autumn red maple leaves cover the peak in brilliant colour.

Reminder: It's best to know the weather forecast before deciding on a mountain outing. It's also advisable to have a local guide to go up the mountain. At the mountain top, you can also shoot sunrise scenes, the sea of clouds and the 'senior monk greeting guests' scene.

Camera: Nikon 135 (28mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/15 second

Best time: After rainfall in spring or autumn.

Beidou Cave

Beidou Cave (*Bei Dou Dong Tian*) to the right of the Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) Cave is one of the top three caves in the Lingfeng Scenic Area. Its long history as a Taoist shrine attracts many Taoist followers. Caves in the mountain and Buddhist and Taoist temples inside the caves are what makes Mt Yandang different from other mountains.

Transport: Walk up some 200 metres on the right side from Guohe (Fruit Box) Bridge to the Dongyao Terrace.

Reminder: There are many private inns in Xianglingtou Village at the centre of the Yandang scenic resort. All the scenic spots of the Lingfeng area are close to the village. A 10-minute walk will lead you to the good photography locations.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/30 second

Best time: Clear days all year round, when there is water.

Spiritual Crag

Lingyan Temple, a breathtaking high altitude tightrope performance and a kilometre-long cliff plank road are several of the well-known attractions of the Lingyan (Spiritual Crag) Scenic Area. A stroll along the small shaded path, especially when the crag is enveloped in mist, is like being in a fairyland.

Transport: Take a bus to the Lower Lingyan Village and then walk some 300 metres to the fields facing the village.

Photography: On a sunny early morning following a rainfall, the Spiritual Crag is enveloped in thin mist and clouds while the Shamao Peak stands distinctively clear above it. The mist and clouds move quickly — click the shutter without hesitation.

Reminder: Try to avoid getting the numerous electricity poles in the fields in your photos.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (50mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/4 second

Best time: On a clear day right after a rainfall, from March to April and July to August.

Lingyan Temple

The hundred-year-old Lingyan Temple, headed by an eminent monk, still receives endless streams of pilgrims. In addition to enjoying those rugged towering peaks and a rare, breathtaking tightrope performance, temple visitors can also take delight in the Xiaolongqiu (Lesser Dragon Waterfall), the Tianzhu (Heavenly Pillar) Peak, Zhanqi (Fluttering Flag) Peak and Wolong (Crouching Dragon) Gully.

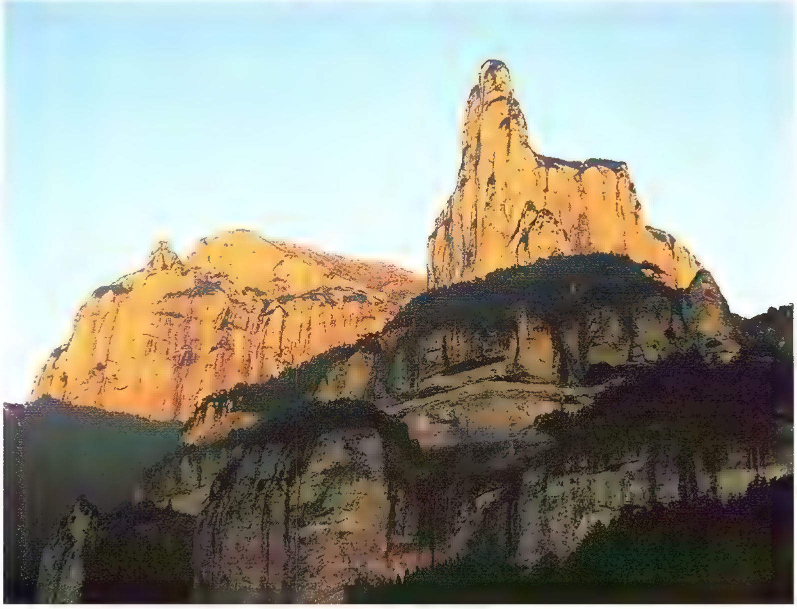
Transport: Take a minibus to the entrance of the Lingyan Scenic Area and then walk to the foot of the Tianzhu Peak; turn left and climb up to the top for a bird's eye view of the temple.

Photography: Various scenic spots in the Lingyan area are spread out along the tourist routes.

Reminder: It' best to have a local guide. Be careful climbing up the cliffs. Those with high blood pressure or heart disease had better forego this mountain.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/4 second

Best time: A period of 10 days around January 15 offers the best autumn scenes.



Guanyin Peak

Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) Peak is a symbolic scenic spot of the Lingyan Scenic Area. Its shape is said to resemble a standing Guanyin.

Transport: A 4 km bus ride leads to the Upper Lingyan Village. After getting off the bus, walk to the left for about 100 metres to the Feiquan Temple road or the small roadside vegetable gardens.

Photography: Bathed in the morning sun, the peak resembles the Goddess of Mercy on the lotus throne with a Buddha's light halo. The place is also ideal for photographing the orbits of stars. After several hours of exposure, the arc star-shaped lines surround the peak, giving a very cool shot.

Reminder: After 9 p.m. is the best time to photograph the stars. Make sure there are no clouds dew on the roadside grass.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw; aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/8 second

Best time: Autumn.

Baigang Peak Some 1,200 metres above the sea level, Baigang Peak is the highest point of Mt Yandang. In March or April when rain diminishes and the sky clears up, it's the best place to shoot the sunrise and clouds.

Transport: It takes half an hour by taxi to get to the top on the highway going round the mountain.

Photography: The mountain top offers a magnificent view of the Leqing Bay in the East China Sea, the sunrise and a rolling sea of clouds if you're lucky.

Reminder: Baigang Peak is a military base with an army garrison. Tourists are generally denied access, but photography tour groups, jointly organized with local tourism administrative authorities, may be exempted if permission is secured in advance from the army.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/4 second

Best time: When the sky clears up after the rain in March or April.

Great Dragon Waterfall

The waterfall at Dalongqiu (Great Dragon Waterfall) drops down 197 metres and looks especially magnificent in torrential rains.

Transport: Just inside the Dalongqiu Scenic Area entrance, walk about 500 metres to the right up the mountain to the top to get a panoramic view of Dalongqiu.

Photography: The rainy season in spring and autumn is ideal for capturing a complete view of Dalongqiu and the waterfall. Fantastic pictures can be created amid misty rain or in sunshine.

Reminder: Be careful as there is no path up to the mountain top. It's advisable to hire a local guide to help you find the way up and help with your backpack.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (50mm lens); aperture: 5.6; shutter speed: 1/60 second

Best time: April and July.

Jinzhu Gully

Jinzhu (Long-root Bamboo) Gully is flanked by ridges and peaks with verdant tree coverage. A babbling brook runs inside the quiet gully.

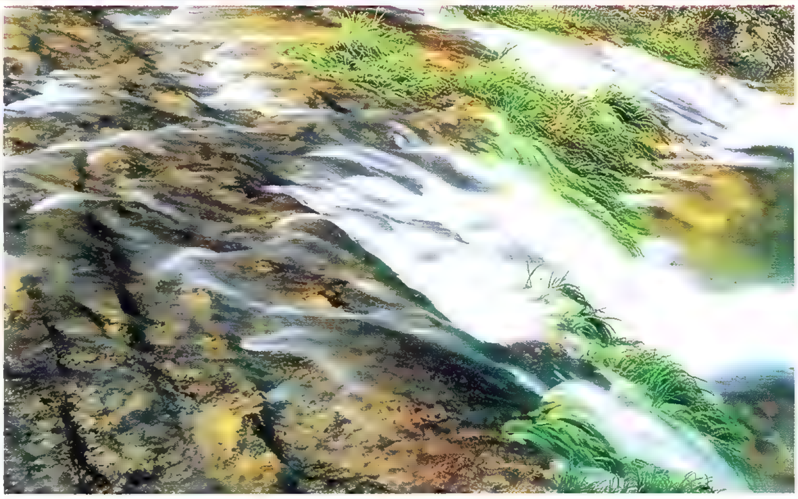
Transport: Get off the bus at Dalongqiu car park and walk into the gully.

Photography: The gully has running water all year round and on the way there are plenty of scenes to photograph.

Reminder: There is no transport in the 4.5-km gully. If you need a guide or help with your backpack, hire a local resident before you set off as it's difficult to find help on the way.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 22; shutter speed: 1 second. Polarized lens is required.

Best time: All year round.



Meiyu Pool

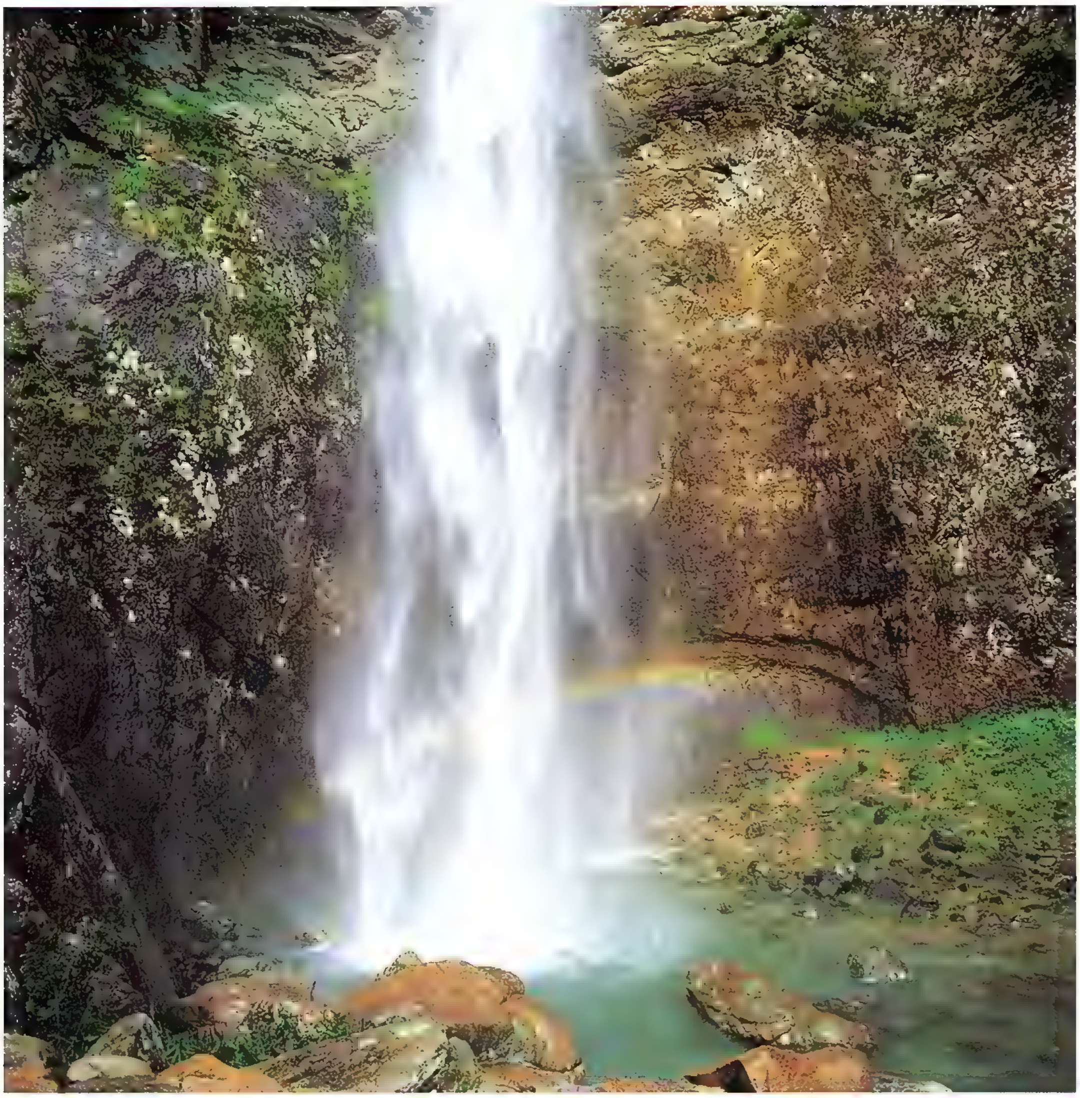
The Meiyu Pool and waterfall are highlights of the Yanhu Lake Scenic Area.

Transport: Get off the bus at Yanhu Lake stop and then walk for 3 km.

Photography: A rainbow often appears when your use the frontlighting technique to shoot the flying waterfall in the afternoon.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 56; shutter speed: 1/25 second

Best time: When the sky clears up after rain.



Zhou Mingfa: From Cowherd to Photographer

Text • Huang Yanhong

Zhou Mingfa has been living on the Tianzi Mountain at Zhangjiajie in Central China's Hunan Province for a dozen years, at first selling books but later doing photography. With beautiful scenery surrounding him, he has become increasingly accomplished as a photographer.

Zhou's home is actually Lingyan, located at the foot of the Yandang Mountain. His early life was hard, having to help his parents make a living by herding cows, farming or cutting firewood. Later he received education at Wenzhou Normal University and became an English teacher at Yandang Middle School upon graduation. After school, he often took pictures for tourists visiting Mt Yandang. This laid the foundation for his change of career to photography later on.

At first, he never stopped to appreciate the landscape of his hometown. Only after many years and a great deal of landscape photographs taken at Zhangjiajie, did it strike him that his hometown is beautiful too. In the past few years, he has often returned to Mt Yandang on special photography tours. Some of his excellent works are published here.

Sea of Clouds at Lingyan

After downpours of rain for a few days running in March and April, mist forms above Lingyan (Spiritual Crag). Standing on the mountain top you'll have a magnificent view of clouds.

Transport: Take a taxi up the mountain along the Baigangjian mountain road and get off after 3 km. A walk of some 200 metres to the right leads to the photo location.

Photography: It's helpful to bring a local photographer come with you. The cloud scenes can last up to 2 hours.

Reminder: If it's a fine day with fog at the foot of the mountain, you may see the sea of clouds.

Camera: Hasselblad 501cw (80mm lens); aperture: 16; shutter speed: 1/15 second

Best time: All year round when the sky clears up after rain.

Translated by Chen Qiuping

Over Mt Yandang

Photos & Article • Huang Yanhong

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Mt Yandang's appeal is its many attractions: There are death-defying tightrope performances by former medicinal herb collectors to an audience with fearfully throbbing hearts. There is the 197-metre high Dalongqiu (Great Dragon Waterfall), one of China's top four waterfalls. An unconventional night tour of the Lingfeng Peak shows off this astounding peak's special charm. Yangjiao (Sheep Horn) Cave hosts many 'divine caves' while the hidden Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) Cave is a surprising multi-layered wonder...

Mt Yandang, in southern Zhejiang, extends several hundred kilometres and is generally divided into northern, middle, southern, western and eastern sections. Its Scenic Area refers mainly to its northern section within the jurisdiction of Leqing County, Wenzhou City.

Yandang in Chinese means 'a reed marsh for wild geese'. In autumn wild geese returning from the south often winter at the lake on the top of Mt Yandang, in which dense reeds and grass abound. As it's close to the Leqing Bay, it's also known as 'a famous mountain on the sea'.

'Flying' Across Lingyan

Going through the east gate into the Lingyan (Spiritual Crag) Scenic Area you will encounter the Lingyan Temple, first built in 979 Besides the temple, the tightrope act between two tall peaks is perhaps the most fascinating sight. A performer walks along an iron wire suspended some 200 metres long between the two towering peaks of Tianzhu (Heavenly Pillar) and Zhanqi (Fluttering Flag) and 200 to 300 metres above ground, without any safety provisions.

At 10 a.m., to the sounds of firecrackers, one man abseiled down the Tianzhu Peak, clinging close to the cliff like a lizard. In the process he repeatedly bounced off the cliff, hovering, then steadied himself

1. Shiwei Rock amid the mist. (by Li Changxian)

2. A breathtaking tightrope performance in the Dalongqiu Scenic Area.

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at a proper foothold, extending his arms in a thrilling pose before he suddenly slid further down the rope towards the ground. The audience collectively held their breath watching his astounding performance. Afterwards, firecrackers from the mountain top overwhelmed their ears, signaling that a man was boldly starting his tightrope walking performance on the wire. In a series of death-defying movements, he hung upside down, walked using hands or feet, circled the wire, stood on one leg and scattered 'paper flowers from heaven' for the climax. He reached the other side on Zhanqi Peak amid loud applause.

Later I saw a similarly breathtaking cycling performance in mid-air at Dalongqiu Scenic Area.

According to Zhou Mingfa, a photographer who grew up in the Lingyan Village, local villagers used to eke out a living by collecting medicinal herbs in often perilous climbs on the cliffs there. In particular, as they went after a rare herb growing on the bare cliff, these farmers would tie themselves onto a rope to descend to the right spot to collect it. Over time, they became incredibly proficient at scaling the cliffs.

When tourism began to develop in the area, the Lingyan Village set up a cliff-climbing and tightrope walking team. Dozens of villagers raised funds for shares in their team and now, each share gets a dividend between 20,000 ~ 30,000 yuan a year. As a result, requests for new shares are now denied.

The Hidden Guanyin Cave

We stayed at the Chaoyang Mountain Villa, right beside the Lingfeng Scenic Area because it was convenient for our night tour of the area's nature.

The moon's crescent was hanging on the horizon and the meandering mountain ranges appeared as a dark paper-cut silhouette, seemingly telling an ancient tale. The indescribable sense of mystery and wonder is probably why so many people are willing to come from afar and pay a 30-yuan entrance fee to wander around the darkness.

The Guanyin Cave is a rare religious site, mysteriously hidden in a fissure of the Hezhang (Palms Together) Peak, and stands 113 metres high and merely 14 metres wide. Inside the cave is a nine-storey structure, with the Tianwang Hall (Hall of the Heavenly Kings) facing the mountain gate. Visitors climb 403 stone steps to reach the hall on the top floor, passing several spacious platforms. Looking down at the people climbing up the steps and then up at the Buddhist halls still above gives a certain kind of enlightenment: Life is like an endless flight of stairs, and it pays to reach the top.

The Buddha of Medicine is enshrined in the hall on the seventh floor and pilgrims pack this hall to light the longevity lamps. Looking out from the hall, you understand what is meant by 'one line sky' — a thread of the sky seen through the mountain wall crevice — and see the peaks as if they were flat. On the left cliff wall there is a natural profile of the Goddess of Mercy. It is said the cave's name came from this formation. An

1. Hezhang Peak in the Lingfeng Scenic Area.

2. The 'broken-heart' cliff in the Lingyan Scenic Area. The *kungfu* movie *Brave Archer and His Mate* was shot here.

3. Peaks piercing the clouds. (by Li Changxian)

4. Peaks by the Xiansheng Gate.

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image of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, also a product of nature, is on the right cliff wall.

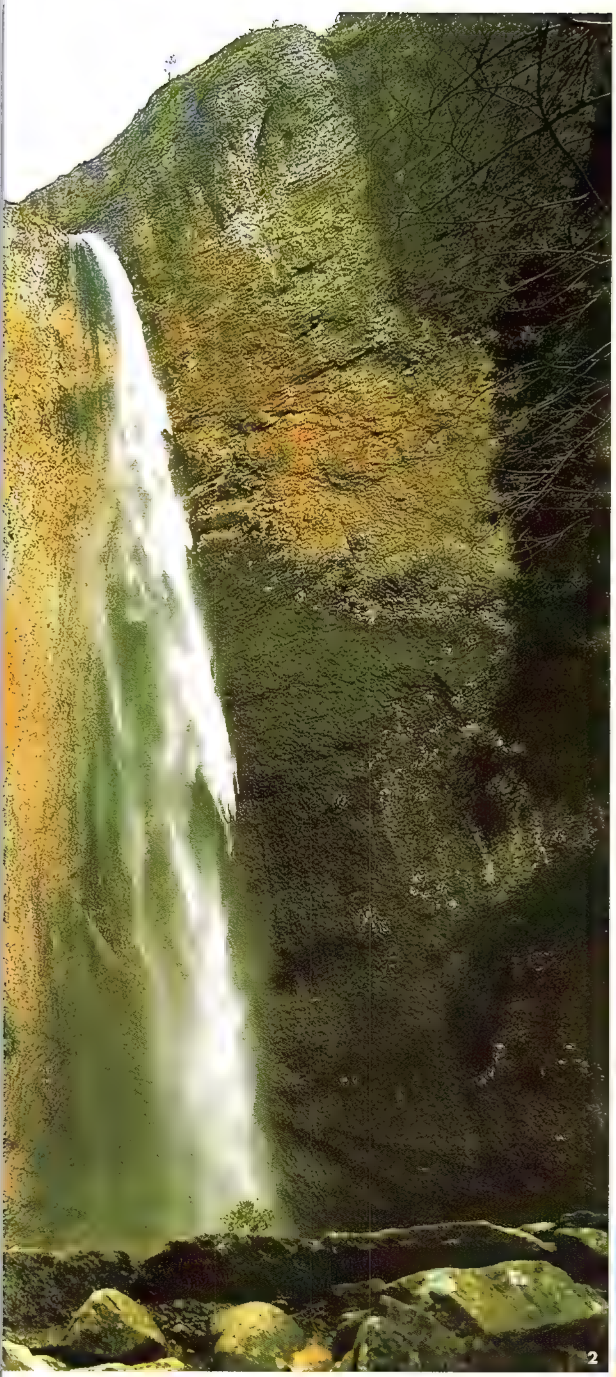
On the top floor, the Goddess of Mercy sits, surrounded by 18 standing arhats while several hundred glittering tiny Guanyin images cover the walls on both sides. Variably sized red candles glimmer, presenting a potent religious atmosphere.

Ming Dynasty Wooden Arches

The next day we visited Nange Village, the hometown of Zhang Lun.

Zhang Lun (1413—1483) was a *jinshi* (a successful candidate in the highest imperial civil service examination) who served the Ming court for some 40 years. A well-known loyal and noble-hearted court official, he resigned from his post and returned to his hometown in 1476. He passed away in 1483. Emperor Xianzong gave special permission for his descendents to build seven memorial arches in the village. Five of them still exist today.

After getting off the bus, we were immediately drawn to a string of wooden arches. Each one is a double-eaved, six-pillar structure with beautiful brackets between pillars and crossbeams. They not only display the architectural style of southern China in the Ming dynasty but also record the outstanding achievements of Zhang Lun and his descendants: between 1440 to 1530, the Zhang family had four successful candidates



in the imperial examinations at the provincial level.

The villagers were very friendly and happy to tell us about their ancestors. They are proud of Zhang Lun, and claim that around 90 percent of the villagers are his descendents. The first arch was built by Zhang Chaofeng, Zhang Lun's great grandson to commemorate the Zhang family's capability in cultivating three jinshis in four generations — his great grandfather, grandfather and himself.

Leading from the arches is a village street paved with different patterns of cobblestones, which have become smooth and shiny over several hundred years of wear. Zhang Lun's residence is far down one of the lanes and though a wooden gateway remains, sadly, the dilapidated house looks like it could collapse at any time.

Visiting Waterfalls

Of the numerous waterfalls at Mt Yandang, Dalongqiu is the most famous.

'Qiu' in ancient Chinese means waterfall. Dalongqiu Waterfall enjoys the same wonderful reputation as those at Huangguoshu in Guizhou, Hukou on the Yellow River and Diaoshuilou by Jingpo Lake in Heilongjiang. Among them, the Dalongqiu has the highest sheer drop.

Sanzhepu (Three-terraced Falls) is another attraction worth a visit. We feared that, being the dry season, it would be a fruitless trip. The guard at the entrance told us there was only 'a little bit' of water but we decided to try our luck.

Since the top terrace requires time and energy to reach it and the bottom terrace is quite easy to reach, we opted for the middle one. As we got closer, we heard faint sounds. Water dripped down like drizzle, and we wondered if the site staff were slowly splashing water down from atop the mountain to reduce the tourists' disappointment. Nevertheless, the large number of visitors there seemed to be in good humour.

Though small, the waterfall changes over time, being huge at one time and dwindling to nothing at other times. The drops drift down — sometimes in arcs, other times in curved or straight lines — in varying, musical rhythms of nature.

A Mountain of Divine Caves

Yangjiaodong (Sheep Horn Cave), one of the eight scenic areas of Mt Yandang, is a solitary mountain of the northeastern section. None of its peaks are very tall, with Fangyan, the main peak, being 450 metres above sea level. But local residents consider the area as the most spiritual in Mt Yandang. It is therefore

1. Five Ming dynasty arches still exist at Nange Village.

2. The Dalongqiu Waterfall, one of China's top four waterfalls.

3. Nange villagers are drying rice-flour noodles — a local delicacy — in the sun.

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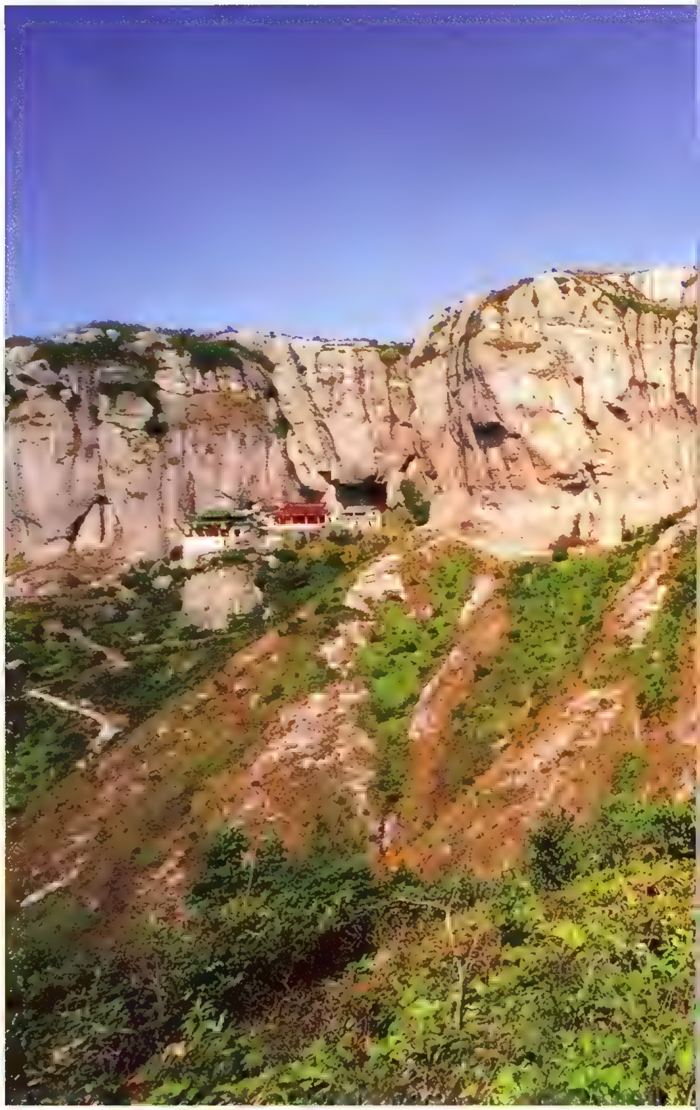

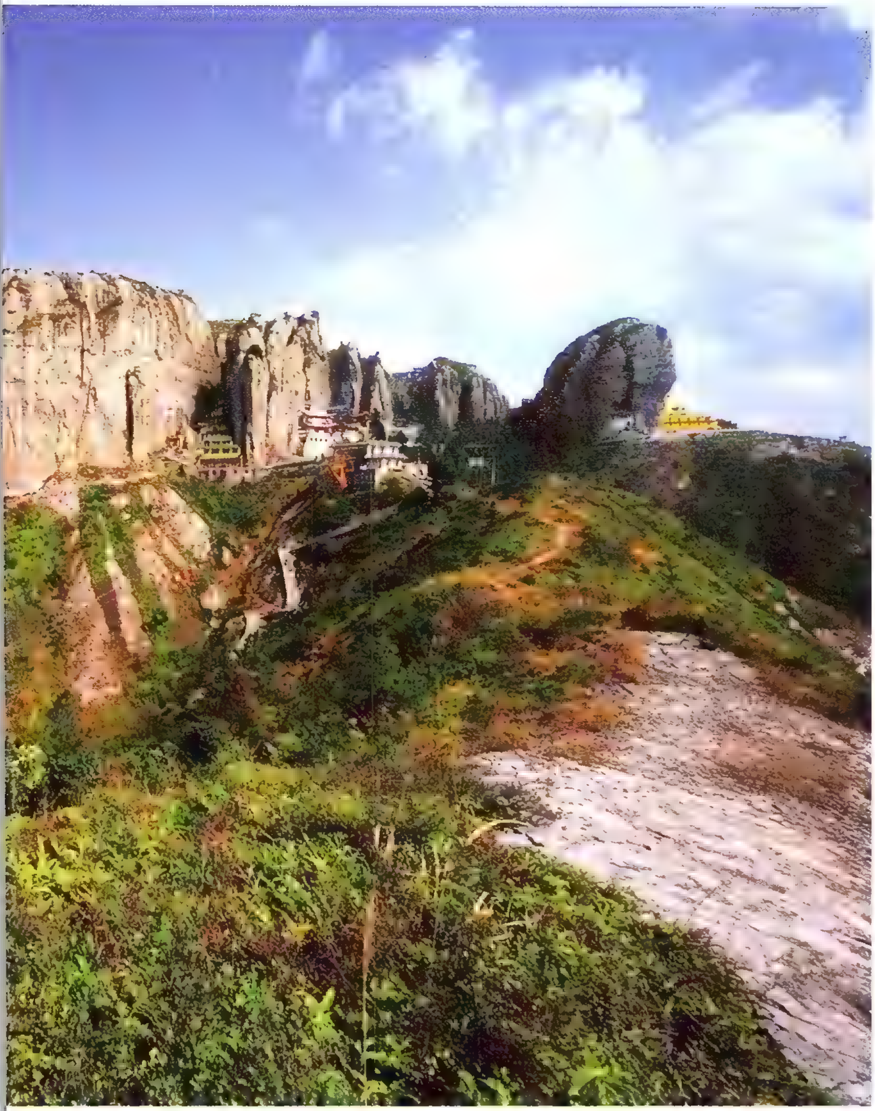

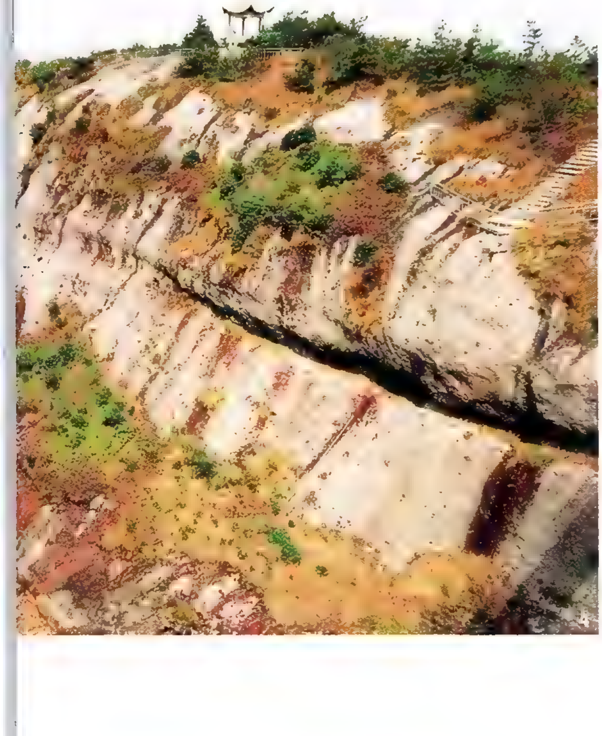

1. The mist-laden landscape beneath the Fangdong Scenic Area. (by Ye Jintao)

2. A distant view of the Sheep Horn Cave, a huge rock formation with many caves.

3. An awe-inspiring walk along the cliff edge path at Fangdong.

4. At the Yangjiaodong Peak.

5. A Taoist ceremony inside the Sheep Horn Cave.

always crowded with visitors, pilgrims in particular. Visitors can either walk up the mountain by the stone steps while enjoying the scenery or take the less popular cableway up.

Half way up the mountain is a huge rock formation that somewhat resembles the famous Ayers Rock in Australia. What's different is that 18 caves were formed in the rock wall here. Sheep Horn Cave is the most popular among tourists. Inside, thick and large red candles stand on both sides of the red-painted altar loaded with offerings. Two groups of Taoist priests in vibrant robes were performing a ceremony amidst a crowd. Each group had seven to eight serious-looking priests. A Taoist believer told me that such a service starts at 5 a.m. and lasts till 3 p.m. The rites are repeated during the period. When I entered the cave, a Taoist priest was muttering to himself while waving a rope in the air. Suddenly there came a crack — the master of the other group pounded the table with a piece of hardwood, symbolizing the descent of deities to get rid of demons.

Translated by Chen Qiuping

Taoist Priests of Fangdong

After passing a dozen big bends on the winding main road we arrived at the Fangdong (Square Cave), a uniquely positioned cave in the Lingyan Scenic Area. It's indeed precipitous — the only access to it is a one metre-wide plank path built along the cliff edge. The path is some 1,000 metres long and where there's a break in it, a 100-metre long chain bridge is suspended about 200 metres across the air. It's a scary proposition to walk across it.

As we came closer to the cave, a number of tourist guides confronted us, exhorting us with patience and sincerity in hope that we would engage one of them. Wanting to turn them down, we pretended that we came just for a walk not for sightseeing, and luckily we were not bothered any more.

We followed the path to the Meihua (Chinese plum flower) Cave where Princess Meihua is enshrined. Before we could get a closer look at the cave, several people dressed in Taoist robes came out to greet us and tried to aggressively sweet talk us into letting them tell our fortunes. Later, I found out online that there is no officially registered Taoist facility here.

1. The picturesque Nanxi River. (by Shao Jiaye)

2. The Nanxi River in spring. (by Li Changxian)

3. The mountain village enveloped in the mist and rays of the morning sun. (by Li Changxian)

Ancient Villages Along the Nanxi River

Photos · Shao Jiaye, Li Changxian, Huang Yanhong Article · Huang Yanhong

The Nanxi River area charms all who come here.

Its beautiful waters with strange rocks, waterfalls and fascinating shoals, ancient villages and secluded woods are great scenes for visitors...

Its water meets first-class standards, having just one ten-thousandth of a gram of sand and a neutral pH of 7...

Its length stretches to 150 kilometres, with seven scenic spots, 36 bends, and 72 shoals...

It's time to visit ancient villages such as Furong, Linkeng and Cangpo, which have survived the ravages of time. Stroll by the old residences embraced by farmlands, water and hills to experience the unique South China style.

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Exquisite Furong Village

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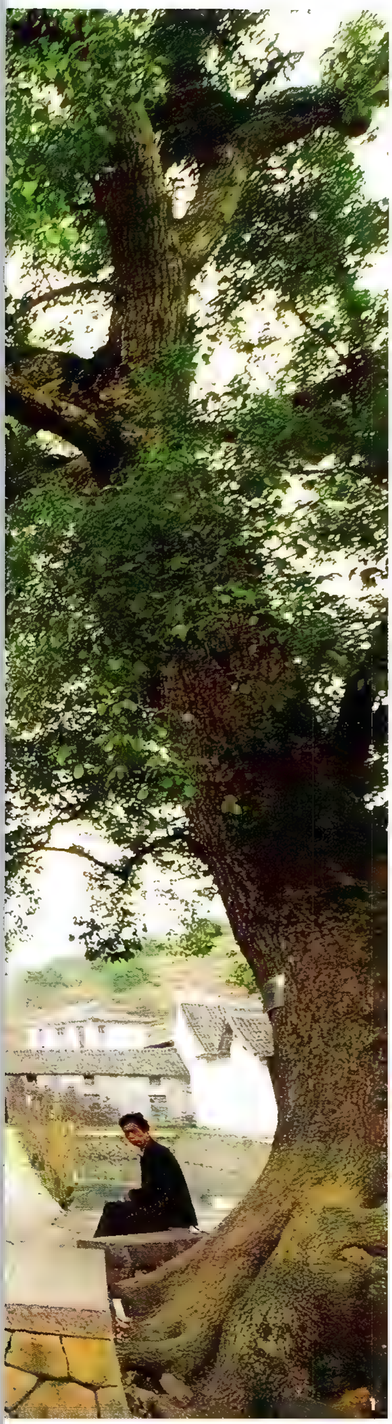

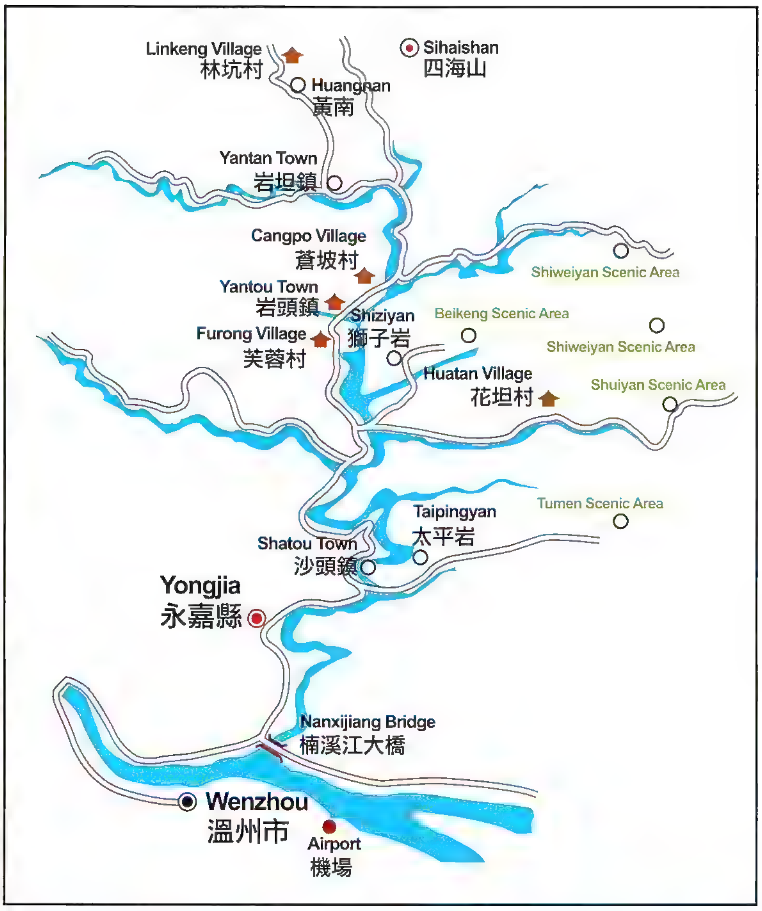
Linkeng Village
林坑村
Sihaishan
四海山
Huangnan
黃南
Yantan Town
岩坦鎮
Cangpo Village
蒼坡村
Shiweiyan Scenic Area
Yantou Town
岩頭鎮
Shiziyan
獅子岩
Beikeng Scenic Area
Furong Village
芙蓉村
Shiweiyan Scenic Area
Huatan Village
花坦村
Shuiyan Scenic Area
Taipingyan
太平岩
Tumen Scenic Area
Shatou Town
沙頭鎮
Yongjia
永嘉縣
Nanxijiang Bridge
楠溪江大橋
Wenzhou
溫州市
Airport
機場

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The ancient Furong Village is a mirror image of many other villages in the Nanxi River area. In the late Tang dynasty (618—907), ancestors of the Chen family settled here and today most of the villagers are still surnamed Chen. During its heyday in the Southern Song dynasty (1127—1279), the present Yantou Town and Tanxia Village were also part of Furong Village.

A Sensible Village Layout

Walking on the grey stone path in the village proved to be difficult, as it was rough and uneven. The local villagers told us that the rounded stones were intentional as the rainwater would easily flow off them and into the ditches on the sides. This Ruyi (Auspicious) or Changtang street, over 200 metres long, is considered the busiest area of Furong Village.

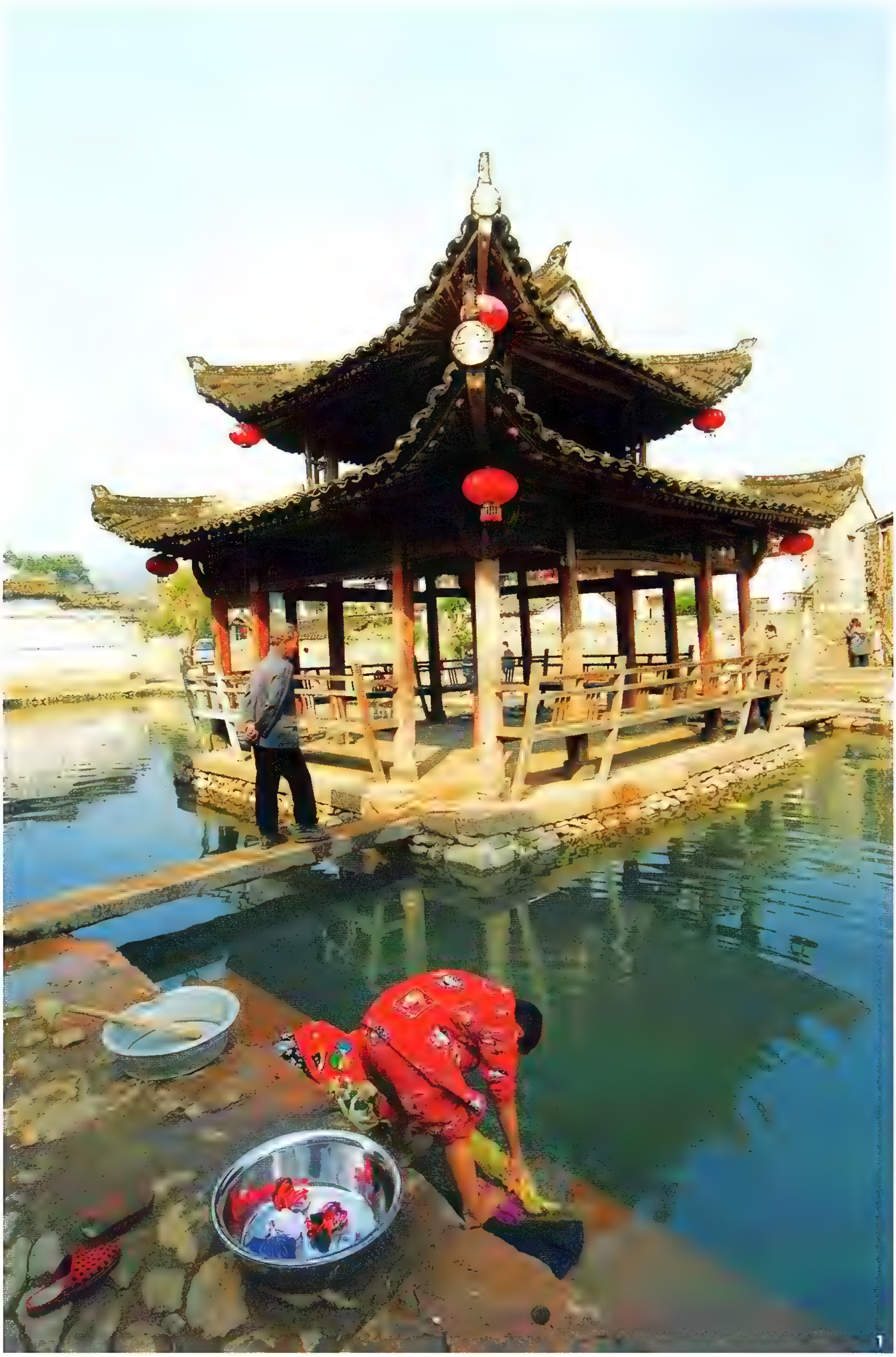
The configuration of the village is based on its seven road and eight canal convergence points. Each road convergence point is termed a 'xing' and the ponds are called a 'dou' by the locals. Roads and canals crisscross in a unique interaction. In peacetime, the function of these points was to beautify the environment and prevent fire; in wartime, they could become command points from which water could be released to contain fiery attacks. 'Xing' and 'dou' together in Chinese mean 'stars', which implies another

1. The streams and bridges of this hundred-year old village are really beautiful.

2. Villagers and travellers mingle on Furong's old street.

3. A lot of visitors stroll down the long covered walkway of Lishui Street during the peak travelling week of the Spring Festival.

4. Ancient villages along the Nanxi River River have a secluded and enchanting environment with pavilions, towers, terraces and ponds.



1. Furong Pavilion is the centre of activities for the villagers.

2. An elderly man rides his bicycle in Furong Village.

3. The old Furong Village remains much the same as in ancient times.

4. Ancient houses of Cangpo Village, a neighbour of Furong Village.

5. Confident children have their picture taken in front of Furong Academy.

expectation of the ancestors: talented descendants of the village are as many as the stars in the sky.

Although Furong means hibiscus flower in Chinese, there are no hibiscus in the village at all. In the evening, many elderly people gather around the Furong Pond, with its exquisite pavilion in the centre, to chat leisurely. Women beat their clothes into cleanliness with wooden clubs at this pond, while the children often play excitedly nearby.

Encouraging Both Farming and Education

The great number of talented people from the Nanxi River area — a total of 700 imperial examination

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graduates from the fifth year of Tang Emperor Wude's reign to the 30th year of Qing Emperor Guangxu's reign — indicates the strong emphasis placed on education here. The ideology of studying while farming was put into the clan rules and regulations in villages of the area. For example, one rule stated that 'schools are to be opened, students are to be encouraged to study and financial aid is to be given to children who study hard; their examinations are to be subsidized; special public farmlands, which can never be sold, are designated to support students in their studies.' Even in 1940s, children who entered the senior high school and college were entitled to tuition support from these clans' public funds. Today, this generosity can still be seen in the village announcements, which state that village children enrolled in university or key senior high schools can get an award of 300 yuan and 150 yuan respectively. Though it is not a lot of money, it shows the priority given to education.

An air of culture emanates from the old buildings of Furong Academy by the pond, standing quietly amidst the greenery.

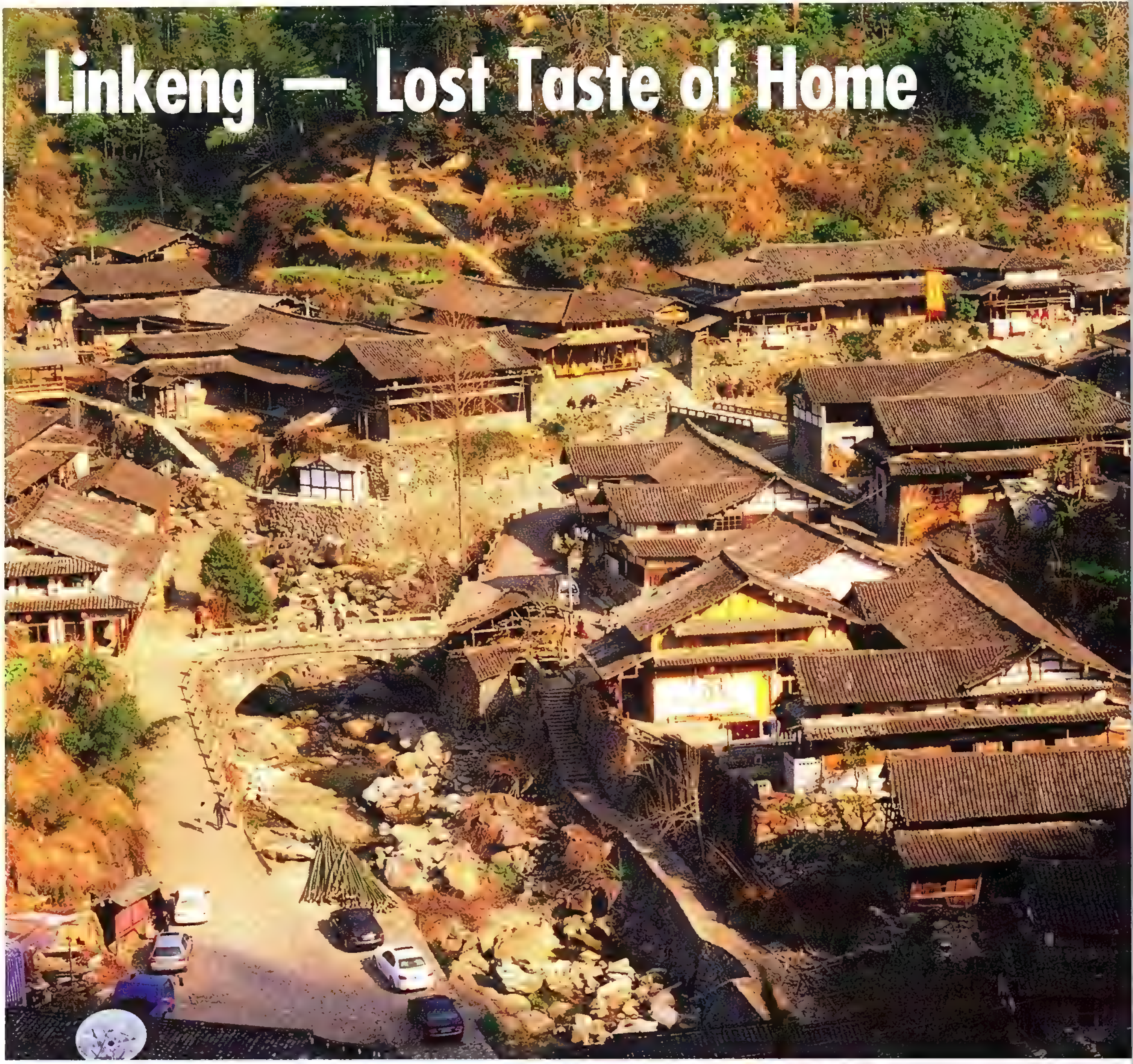
A Heroic Story

Few locals know of the moving and heroic story that occurred in Furong Village seven hundred years ago.

A hero named Chen Yuzhi came to Furong Village in 1276, the first year of Emperor Jingyan's reign in the Southern Song Dynasty. With the influence of Wen Tianxiang, the minister, Chen and one thousand members of his clan desperately resisted the Yuan troops. Leading eight hundred warriors he retreated to Furong Cliff and held fast for two years. During that time they repulsed the attack of the Yuan troops many times by holding strategically important locations.

In March 1279, as he heard of the downfall of the Southern Song dynasty Chen was attacked from all sides. He decided to die heroically and so, dressed in his court clothes and with his wife, he whipped his horse, whose eyes were covered by red paper, into a swift course towards the cliff.... The eight hundred warriors followed and jumped off the sheer precipice, giving their life for the country.

Linkeng — Lost Taste of Home



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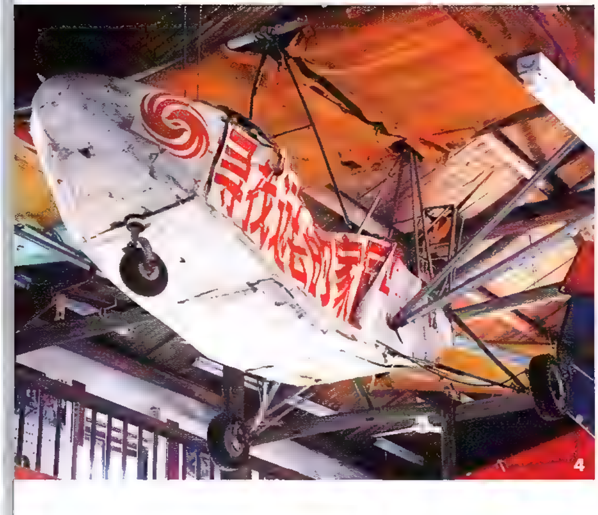

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Linkeng has won public praise in the mainland of China. People consider it as a bright pearl inlaid deep into the mountains of the Nanxi River's upper reaches.

Within the 138 households and over 500 people in Linkeng Village, about 95 percent are surnamed Mao. We stayed in Guxiangcun Inn located at the entrance of the village. Mao Peigai, the owner, started running his inn several years ago. Once the head of the village, he told us some stories of this place.

An Aerial Photography Accident

In September 2001 when Phoenix TV was making a special TV program called 'Looking for the Lost Home' they took a fancy to Linkeng and decided to make it the last episode of the TV program. No-one could have imagined that a plane would crash there that last day.

The accident still remains fresh in the memory of Mao Peigai, the head of the village at that time. He said: 'I was excited to broadcast the news to everyone that the plane was coming to take pictures of their village. Most of the villagers had never seen an airplane before, certainly not one flying over their own fields and houses, so they were all outside peering upwards. Soon, Zhao Qunli, photographer and pilot, was circling the village several times and my camera was fixed on the plane. The plane was very low on its last pass and Zhao Qunli waved his hand in greeting. I quickly took a shot of him but unexpectedly, it was to be his last picture.

'The plane hit a high-tension line and Zhao Qunli died of electric shock. A memorial hall was built near the parking lot at the village entrance. The 'Bee 3C' light aircraft, which served him well for many years, is hanging in the middle of the hall.'

A Wonderful 'Rural Village' Feeling

A steady stream of visitors came into the village around noon, with many enjoying their lunch in the sunny courtyards by the gurgling stream. Linkeng Village is changing drastically. The villagers are busy sawing wood, building new houses, repairing stairs and doing other construction work. I sat on the open side of the covered bridge to bask in the sunshine while watching the water flowing under the bridge. Both visitors and villagers alike seemed in a pleasant, peaceful mood. What a wonderful feeling it was just sitting there!

In the evening, I walked around the village. There is an old watermill opposite the stream near the entrance of the village but its waterwheel has stopped working. The wooden covered bridge was built at the end of the stream as a place for villagers to relax. Strolling along it I could clearly hear the gurgling stream. As darkness descended and the moon climbed up above the trees, the village took on a fascinating character.

Translated by Wang Zengfen

1. This panoramic view of Linkeng Village was taken in the morning from the top of the mountain.

2. Linkeng Village looks simple, unsophisticated and natural.

3. The villagers are making casks, a handcraft that is fast being lost.

4. Wreckage of the crashed plane Zhao Qunli used for his photography of Linkeng Village.

Travel Tips

Mt Yandang

Long-distance Transportation

By air: From Yongqiang Airport in in Longwan District of Wenzhou City, it's 80 km to the south section of Mt Yandang and under two hours on the first-class highway. To the north section, it's 60 km from the Huangyan Airport in Luqiao District of Taizhou City. Scheduled flights go to and from Guangzhou and Shanghai daily, and Shenzhen on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

By land: Air-conditioned tourist buses go to Mt Yandang daily at 7:30, 9:30, and 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. from the New South Bus Station opposite Wenzhou Railway Station; ticket price is 27 yuan.

Public bus No. 33 from Wenzhou Railway Station goes to Anlanting Dock where you can take a ferryboat to Oubei and then a bus to Dajing or Taizhou; about two hours to get to Yandang Town (Baixi); ticket price: 25 yuan. From there, it's a 10-minute public bus ride to Xianglingtou, the scenic spot centre; ticket price: 2 yuan.

Wenzhou South Bus Station: A bus goes directly to Mt Yandang every hour; ticket price: 28 yuan.

Shanghai Beiguang Bus Station: A bus goes directly to Mt Yandang every hour; the first bus leaves at 8:30 a.m., journey takes about seven hours; ticket price: 130 yuan in the low season, 150 yuan in peak season.

A bus goes from Hangzhou Bus Station directly to Mt Yandang at eight in the morning and two in the afternoon; about five hours, ticket price: 95 yuan.

Local Transportation

In peak season, 10-seat green minibuses go to all the main scenic spots in the area, from Yandang Town (Baixi), the eastern scenic area, to Dalongqiu, the western end; ticket price: 5 yuan.

Regular buses:From Yandang Town, a bus departs every 15 minutes for Mt Yandang's scenic spots. There's no direct bus to the scenic area outside the Yandang Town so you need to change buses to go there.

Xianshengmen Scenic Area: Take the bus from Yandang Town to Dajing Town; ticket price: 3 yuan. Then change to another bus to Xianshenmen; ticket price: 5 yuan.

Yanhu Scenic Area: Take a bus from Yandang Town to Furong Town; ticket price: 5 yuan. Then take a tricycle; ticket price: 3 yuan.

Yangjiaodong Scenic Area: Take a bus from Yandang Town to Huwu Town; ticket price: 6 yuan. Then take a taxi to the scenic spot; price: 10 yuan. Or charter a seven-seat van; cost: 100 yuan for the round trip.

Taxi: During the low season there are no public buses at all so you have to take a taxi or charter a car or van for about 200 yuan per day.

Accommodation — Scenic Area

The following are the discounted prices for a standard hotel room:

Lingyan Hotel ***	210 yuan
Wenzhou Yingyan Hotel ***	280 yuan
Yandangshan Hotel ****	336 yuan
Yandangshan Holiday Inn ***	228 yuan
Wenzhou Yingyuan Hotel ***	328 yuan
Chaoyang Villa ***	280 yuan

There are also many nicely decorated residential inns in the scenic areas providing good service; price varies from 80 to 150 yuan.

Accommodation — Remote Areas

Xianshengmen Scenic Area: there are hotels in Dajing Town; price: 60 to 100 yuan.

Yangjiaodong Scenic Area: there are hotels in Huwu Town; price: 60 to 100 yuan.

Yanhu Scenic Area Furong Village: stay in hotels here while visiting; price: 60 to 100 yuan.

Admissions of Scenic Areas

Lingfeng	30 yuan/ person	Fangdong	20 yuan/ person
Lingyan	30 yuan/ person	Xianshengmen	10 yuan/ person
Dalongqiu	30 yuan/ person	Yangjiaodong	10 yuan/ person
Sanzhepu	10 yuan/ person	Yanhu	10 yuan/ person

Reminders

It's best to follow a tour group for a night tour of Lingfeng during the summer and spring because the guide can provide colourful descriptions of the area. Also, if you are separated with your group or the guide or an unexpected incident happens you can seek help from the scenic area staff. The prime sight is Mt Yandang. While peaks look ordinary in the daytime they appear vivid and full of life at night.

Guide: The cost of hiring a guide from a travel agency is 60 yuan for one scenic area and 35 yuan for a guide at the scenic area.

Climate and timing: Lingfeng, Lingyan and Dalongqiu are must-see, unique sights of Mt Yandang. Of course, it's better to see the waterfalls after abundant rainfall, in May, June, August or September. The 197-metre Dalongqiu Waterfall is especially spectacular on a fine day after the rain.

Make sure you arrange your tour so as not to miss the tightrope performance at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (more performances on holidays), which generally lasts half an hour.

Delicacies and special local products: Wenzhou's seafood — raw oysters and river crab — has a distinctive, tasty flavour found nowhere else. In Wenzhou, the people make excellent fresh mackerel fish balls and fish cake, and never tire of eating them themselves.

Delicacies: Sesame seed cake, deep fried cake in Gulou Street; in Li Datong doubled cooked cake, wonton and so on.

Special local products: Maofeng tea from Yandang, boxwood carving, Yueqing paper-cuts and Wenzhou embroidery.

Nanxi River

Transportation

The most convenient way to go to Nanxi River is through Wenzhou. Besides scheduled flights to Wenzhou, travellers can also take the train from Guangzhou to Jinhua and then change to another train to Wenzhou.

Public buses run from the Wenzhou Railway Station to Oubei Long Distance Bus Station passing Oubei Bridge. You may save some time by taking a ferryboat to Oubei Dock from Wenzhou — only 10 minutes; price: 1 yuan. Then take a 56-

1. The Yangjiaodong parking lot.

2. A private inn in Furong Village.

3. A birthday feast in Furong Village.

4. Almost all the families in Linkeng Village run inns.

5. The autumn scenery of the ancient road. (by Li Changxian)

6. The long covered walkway of Lishui.

7. The pond at the bottom of the Dalongqiu Waterfall.

km, one-hour minibus ride to Yantou Town; price: 11 yuan.

■ **Mt Yandang — Nanxi River:** The highway from Shiweiyan to Yanhu (Wild Goose Lake) has been completed connecting Nanxi River and Mt Yandang, two state level scenic areas. Public buses are not yet allowed to use this route. The 40-minute taxi ride is comparatively expensive, about 200 to 300 yuan.

There are direct buses from Mt Yandang (Xianglingtou) to Nanxi River (Yantou), starting at 7:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (additional one at 4 p.m. in peak season), passing by Yueqing and Yongjia. The trip takes about three hours; ticket price: 25 yuan.

Yantou to Shiweiyan: There is no direct bus from so you have to take a minibus to Hesheng first, at a cost of 3 yuan, then charter a car.

Linkeng: There is no direct bus. Chartering a car costs 250 yuan and takes about five hours for the round trip.

Taxi along the Nanxi River: This is actually a goods van with an awning; cost per day: about 150 yuan. These drivers know the area well and may make travelling easier.

Bicycles can be rented at the local hotel in Yantou Town for visits to the scenic spots and ancient villages along the river.

Accommodation

Hotels are located in Taogong of Yantou Town, Shiziyan and Daruoyan scenic areas.

Yantou Town: Private guesthouses charge only 20 to 30 yuan per room. Hotels of better quality include as Xianrenju Hotel, which charges about 100 yuan per room (breakfast included) and Yingkelou Hotel, which charges 100 yuan per room.

Shiziyan Scenic Area: Private hotels are a little more expensive, about 120 yuan per room.

Household inns: There are many, including the Guxiangcun Hotel, which charges 20 yuan per bed. Tel: (577) 6718 9019

Private inns in Xincun Lane, Yongjia County New Village: There are about seven or eight of these reasonably comfortable inns; price is 40 yuan per room. Other hotels: about 200 yuan per room.

Admissions

Xianrenju: 44 yuan; Shiweiyan Scenic Area: 50 yuan; Raft-drifting from Dutou to Shiziyan: 50 yuan; Yantou Centre: 50 yuan; Yuantou landscape: 30 yuan; viewing the scenery along the Nanxi River River: 10 yuan; ancient Furong Village: 15 yuan; Taogong Cave: 10 yuan; Cangpo Village: 15 yuan

Recommended Itineraries of Nanxi River

■ **Day 1: Shiweiyan, Linkeng Village (stay in Linkeng)**

Take a bus at the bus station of Oubei Dock in the morning (double-check the time in advance) to the Hesheng parking lot; about 66 km, 1.5 hours; ticket: 10 yuan. Take a minibus from there to Shiweiyan; 4 km, 15 minutes; ticket: 4 yuan.

Shiweiyan: There are two entrances for Shiweiyan; ticket price: 50 yuan per person. One entrance is at the foot of Shiweiyan, from where a minibus takes you directly to the top and you can walk back down. The other entrance, under Shiweiyan cliff, is the best choice to see the three small gorges and for viewing scenery on your three-hour climb up.

Linkeng Village: Take a minibus from Shiweiyan parking lot at 1 p.m. to Yantou and get off at Daqiao (big bridge), then another minibus to Huangnan or Yantan town; ticket: 3 ~ 5 yuan. From there you can reach Linkeng Village by a cart or a seven-seat van; about one hour: ticket price: 10 yuan per person.

Lodge overnight in a local house in Linkeng Village.

■ **Day 2: Cangpo Village, Furong Village, Lishui Street, Raft-drifting, Lion Rock (stay in Daruoyan)**

Take a cart or a seven-seat van early in the morning (double check the time in advance) to Huangnan from Linkeng Village, then a minibus to Oubei or Yantou and get off at the entrance of Cangpo Village of Yantou Town at about 9 a.m.

Cangpo Village: Walk about 10 minutes from the village entrance into the village; ticket price: 15 yuan per person, includes an ancient wedding ceremony performance.

Furong Village: Take a minibus from Cangpo Village to Furong Village of Yantou Town. Admission: 10 yuan

Lishui Street: Take a tricycle to Yantou to visit Lishui Street and Yantou Village and have lunch in Yantou Town.

Raft-drifting: After lunch take a tricycle or a minibus heading to Yantan or Hesheng to Dutou Village of Yantou Town, then walk three minutes to the Dutou raft centre. Drifting by bamboo raft to Shiziyan: 8.5 km, about one hour; price of 35 yuan per person (insurance excluded). Each raft holds four people; if less than four people, the price is still the equivalent of that for four.

Lion Rock: Put on your swimming suit in Lion Rock (Shiziyan) and rent a rubber steamboat; one to four people: price is 12 to 60 yuan. Afterwards, take a minibus going to Oubei and get off at Jiuzhang Bridge; change to another minibus to Bilian or Daruoyan and get off at the intersection of Daruoyan Town. Then take a scenic area electromobile (an eco-friendly sightseeing vehicle run by electricity) or a tricycle to Taogongdong of Daruoyan; about 4 km, price: about 3 ~ 5 yuan per person. Stay there for one night (hotels and food are comparatively expensive in Daruoyan so you have to reach an agreement on the price beforehand).

■ **Day 3: Taogong Cave, Twelve Peaks, Shimentai, Baizhang Waterfall, Yaxiaku**

Taogong Cave: Visit Taogongdong: ticket price is 5 yuan; and view the scenery of Daruoyan at 7:30 a.m.

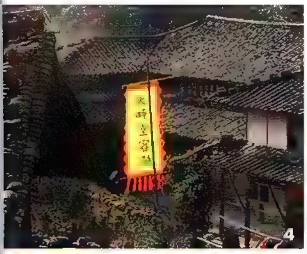
Twelve Peaks: Take an electromobile or a tricycle to Twelve Peaks; about 4 km; ticket price: 3 ~ 5 yuan per person. Admission: 5 yuan.

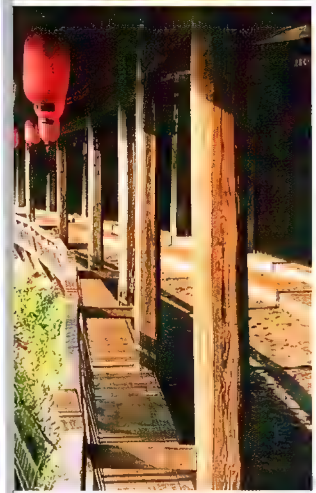
Shimentai: Return to Twelve Peaks parking lot at 9:30 a.m., then take a scenic area electromobile or tricycle to Shimentai; about 3 km, ticket price: 3 ~ 5 yuan. Admission: 5 yuan.

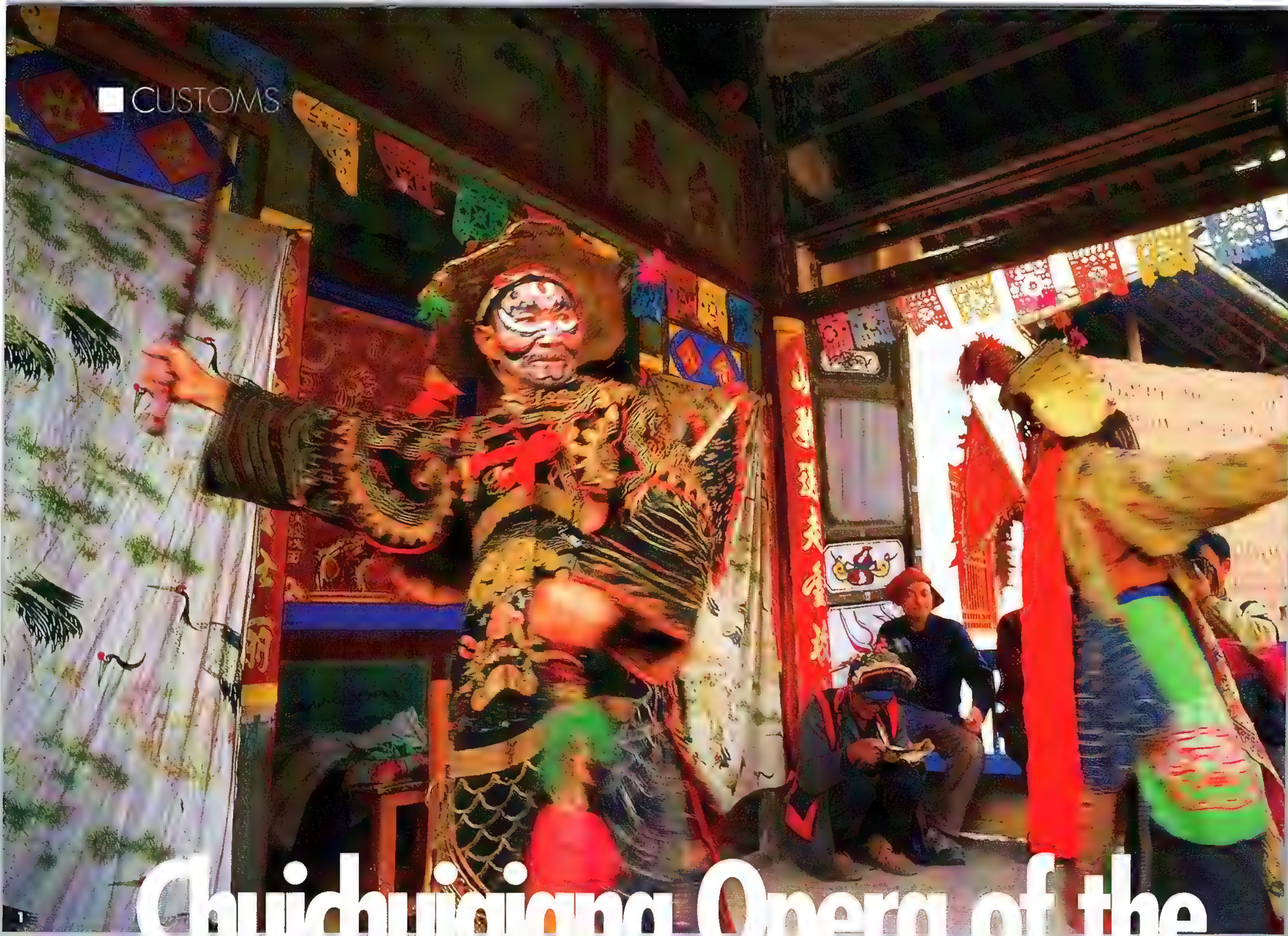
Baizhang Waterfall: Take a scenic area electromobile or tricycle from the Shimentai parking lot at noon to the intersection of Daruoyan Town, then take a minibus going to Bilian Town and get off at Fu'an Village; about 10 minutes, ticket price: 1.5 ~ 2 yuan per person. Then walk along the path in the field to Baizhang Waterfall; about 15 minutes.

Yaxiaku: After Baizhang Waterfall, take a minibus back to Daruoyan from Fu'an Village at 1:30 p.m. and get off at Jiufang Village of Tongzhou. Then take a tricycle to Yaxiaku; 10 ~ 15 minutes. Admission: 5 yuan

Translated by Wang Zengfen



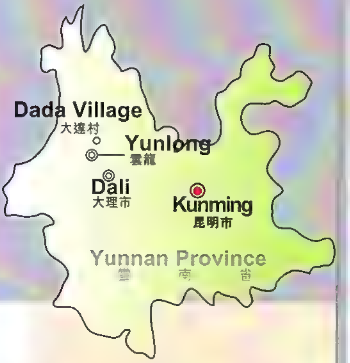




Chuichuiqiang Opera of the Bai in Dali

Photos & Article · Yang Hongwen

Chuichuiqiang, an ancient form of opera, is still quite up to date in some villages of the Bai minority living in Dali Prefecture, Yunnan Province in Southwest China. It reached its peak during the Qing dynasty (1616-1911). Most of the plays of this opera share the same origins as plays of the dominant Han ethnic group. A small fraction of other plays were adapted based on the life of the Bai and their folklore.



We discovered that the period from the second to sixth day of the first lunar month are big days when Chuichuiqiang is performed in Dada Village, Changxin Township, Yunlong County, Dali Prefecture, Yunnan Province.

An Ancient Art Form Revived

Dada Village is a Bai village, consisting of over 240 households and 1,200 inhabitants. According to the inscription 'Origin of Dada Village' by the stage, Zhang Dada, the earliest ancestor of the inhabitants of Dada Village, was the descendant of a Ming dynasty warrior. The village has been in existence ever since, a period of over 600 years. Chuichuiqiang Opera in the village dates back 200 years. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) the opera vanished. In 1982 it was revived, but the scripts, costumes and props were all gone. The villagers tried all means to ask older artists to recall the opera, the educated to rewrite the scripts, and the tailors to create the costumes. The ancient folk art was thus preserved.

Dajie, a Joyous Opera Fair

The day we arrived was the opening day of the Chuichuiqiang Opera performance. The whole

1. Actors put on their make up for a performance of Bai Chuichuiqiang Opera.

2. An ancient opera stage in Dada Village. Constructed in 1934, it has survived the wear and tear of 70 plus years.

3. Dada Village is populated by the Bai ethnic minority and is nestled in the mountains. Chuichuiqiang, an ancient form of opera, is still popular.

village would celebrate the coming of spring, to have fun and to feast. The Bais called it the *dajie* (hit the street) procession.

The actors put on their costumes and make up on the third floor of the stage. Women were not allowed to take the female roles in Chuichuiqiang Opera. Men took their place. In the past women were banned from the stage.

The grand *dajie* procession started from the square and traveled through the main alleys of the village. People would then rush to the spacious courtyard to see the riotous procession. First was the Monkey King, whom was played by a 15- or 16-year-old boy. He led a tribe of smaller boys dressed as monkeys who caused mayhem and chaos to the courtyard. Then came two bulls. These bulls pretended to plough a field, while a farmer followed them alongside. Small girls, dressed appropriately, played the 'emperor's whip', a jolly dance with a snapping whip, to signify the transplanting of rice seedlings. These performances are meant to add to the gaiety and wish happiness and good harvests. The households of the villages were prepared. Smiling, they treated the performers with wine, cigarettes, tea and sweet soup added with popped rice. After that, they put rice, glutinous rice dumplings, pastry, preserved ham, tofu sausage and 10 yuan or more one by one into various containers and instruments carried by the managers of the troupe. Each year the opera is performed voluntarily by the villagers. Money and food are collected from the whole village for the actors in the form of naochun, or spring celebration.

2

Acted by Two Generations

The third day of the first lunar month is opera day. The first play was *Sanchushou*, a god-worshipping ritual play, in which the God of Fortune, God of Knowledge and Bless-giving Heavenly Official take turns to chant or speak. In the play, the God of Knowledge sat high on the table. He spotted on the living rooster with a red brush after he finished chanting. Sacrifices were then offered on the stage, marking the formal beginning of the spring opera festival for the year. The actor who played the God of Knowledge was an 83-year-old man. The second play was *Zhanluocheng* (Fighting Warrior Luocheng). Mounted and dismounted, with spear, whip and fists, the two warriors fought a dozen bouts but could only draw a tie. The two actors, both over fifty, gave it their all. In the third play *Zhaxi*, (Miscellaneous Play), three clowns made impromptu comic gestures and remarks in the Bai dialect. The audience broke out in riotous laughter.

3

In the evening, the village primary school held a get-together with songs and dances by students. The first programme was still Sanchushou, but it was performed by kids. In all aspects, the kid's performance was comparable to that of the three veterans in the morning. Obviously Chuichuiqiang was now in safe hands in Dada Village. Given time, the young actors would surely surpass that of the older generation.

Translated by Zhang Boli

To watch Chuichuiqiang Opera

You can a bus from Kunming Long Distance Bus Station to Yunlong County. The trip takes 7 to 8 hours. Two trips go daily from Yunlong Country seat to Xinxiang Township. The journey takes about half an hour. Having arrived at Xinxiang, you may ask the local township government for help in renting a jeep to Dada Village. It is recommended that you walk into Dada Village. The entrance to the dirt road leading to Dada Village is right by the highway (Yunlong County Seat to Lanping County Seat) bridge of the local township government. Passing a Fengyu (wind and rain) Bridge, follow the dirt road on an uphill climb to the top, you will reach Dada Village. This section of dirt road is about 4.5 km.

Chinese Family & Clan Names

Text • Kristy Wong   Research • Suzan So

Q1: **What does 姓氏 (*xing shi*) mean?**

The character *xing* 姓 first appeared when China was a matriarchal society. *Xing* is formed by combining the character 女 *nu*, (woman) with 生 *sheng*, (born or birth), indicating that all newborn babies adopted the family name of their mothers. Before the Zhou dynasty (C.1100 — 221 BC.), only royal families could own both xing and shi, in which the latter indicated their vassals or official position.

Q2: **When did the first (*xing shi*) appear in China?**

風 Fēng (Wind) was the very first surname in China, appearing over 3,000 years ago. Studies show that the Chinese had around 22,000 surnames, and many of them have been used for thousands of years.

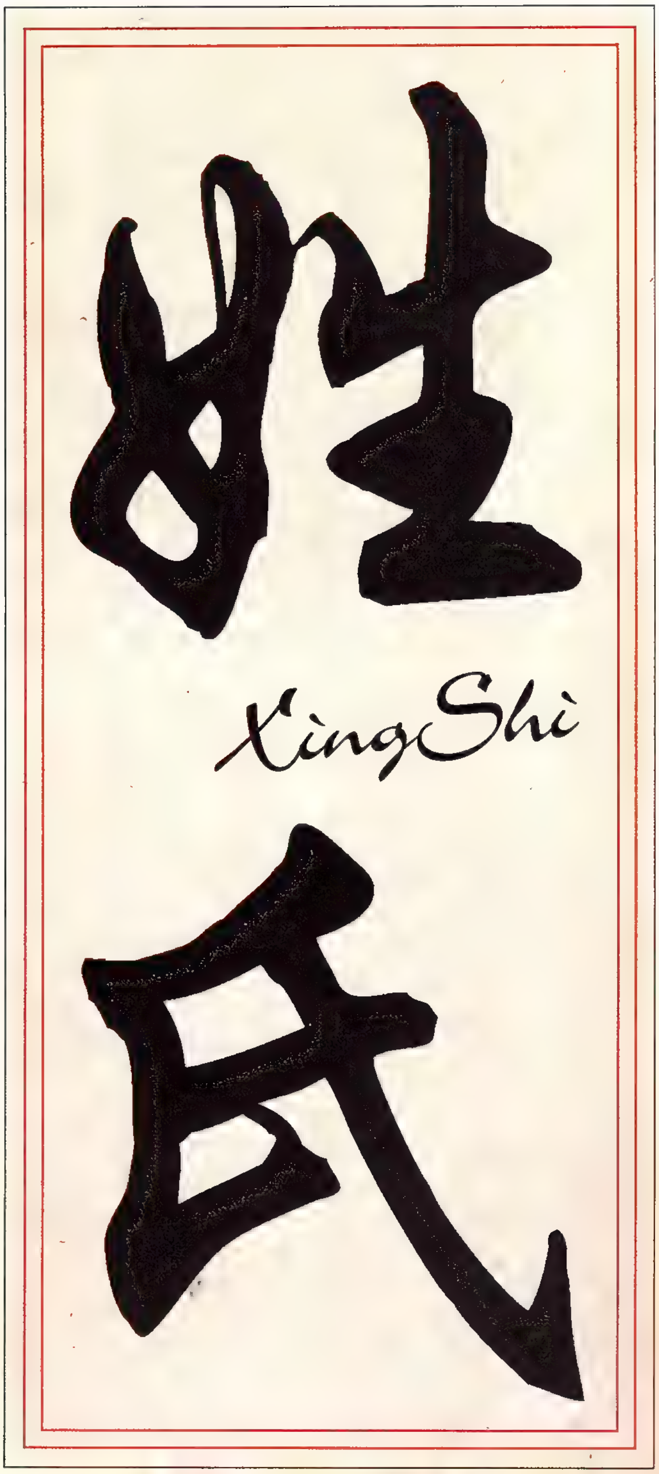
Q3: **Are there any difference between *xing* and *shi*?**

Xing (family name) and *shi* (clan name) have different meanings. *Xing* was created earlier than *shi* Between the Xia and Zhou dynasties (C.2100 — 221 BC.), men were usually claimed under *shi* (clan names) and women *xing* (mother's name). There are two situations that people were not allowed to get married: (1) Two people with the same family and clan names; (2) Two people with the same family name yet different clan names. However, two people belonging to the same clan could get married if they had different family names. After the Qin and Han periods (around AD 220), the characters *xing* and *shi* were grouped together and they meant more or less the same thing (family name or surname).

Q4: **What is the oldest *xing shi* in China?**

The oldest Chinese family surname is 姬 Ji which has a history of nearly 5,000 years. It was also the family name of the Zhou dynasty (C. 1100 — 221 B.C.). Huangdi, also known as Yellow Emperor, owned the family name of Ji and clan name 軒轅 Xuan Yuan. After he had subdued the followers of Yandi (the Red Emperor), the two emperors became the first leaders who to united the Chinese race. They shared the same ancestor — Shennong. Chinese now claim themselves「炎黃子孫」(descendants of Yandi and Huangdi).

Since only those who were connected to Huangdi on their paternal side continued to use Ji as a family name, those who were not had to create their own family names.



Q5: **Where were the earliest *xing shi* developed in China?**

The Yellow River Delta was the cradle of Chinese civilization, so most Chinese surnames originated from this area. Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan and Shandong Provinces have each even given birth to over than three surnames.

Three Homelands of Chinese Family Names

The following places are to give a brief comparison of three major homelands of Chinese family names:

1. The Chinese Scholar Tree in Hongdong, Shanxi Province

In the chaotic period between the late Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and the early Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the residents of 31 counties in Shanxi were forced to move to abandoned lands in order to balance the population. This removal process lasted for over 120 years. A huge Chinese scholar tree next to Guangji Temple in Hongdong, Shanxi Province was the place where their journey began. Hongdong County remembers their ancestors and celebrates this event by hosting a festival which runs from 1~10 April.

Transportation: Take train K703 from Beijing to Hongdong; then take a taxi from Hongdong Bus Terminus and get off at Da Huai Shu stop in Hongdong.

Address: Next to Guangji Temple, northwest of Hongdong County Seat, Shanxi Province.

Admission: 22 yuan

2. Stone Wall Village in Ninghua, Fujian

Shibi (Stone Wall) Village is the place were the ancestors of the Hakka people originated. In the late Western Jin dynasty (265 — 316), many Han people moved southward from central China (for example, from Hunan Province), and started a new life by farming in southern China which had abundant fertile land and a mild climate. The main hall of the Hakka Public Ancestral Temple has 151 tablets of Hakka ancestors enshrined within, all with different family names.

Transportation: buses depart from Sanming City Railway Station to Ninghua County. **Duration:** 3 hours. **Fare:** 32 yuan. Then take a taxi from Ninghua County to Shibi (Stone Wall). **Duration:** 20 minutes. **Fare:** 3 yuan.

Add: Stone Wall Village, Ninghua County, Sanming City, Fujian Province.

3. Zhuji Lane in Nanxiong, Guangdong

Located between Meiling and Nanxiong cities in Guangdong Province, Zhuji Lane was once a post station during the Tang dynasty (618 — 906). It is the birthplace of many overseas Chinese who originated from the Pearl River Delta area.

Transportation: Buses depart from Shaoguan Railway Station to Nanxiong city, a journey of less than 2 hours.

Fare: 15 yuan. At Nanxiong Bus Terminus, there is a bus going to Zhuji Lane every 1.5 hours. **Fare:** 2 yuan.

Address: Zhuji Lane, Nanxiong City, Guangdong Province.

Admission: 12 yuan

Others...

Mausoleum of Yandi in Hunan

Transportation: There is a bus going from Guangzhou in Guangdong Province to Binzhou in Hunan Province.

Address: Yanling Village, Yanling County, Hunan Province.

Admission: 15 yuan

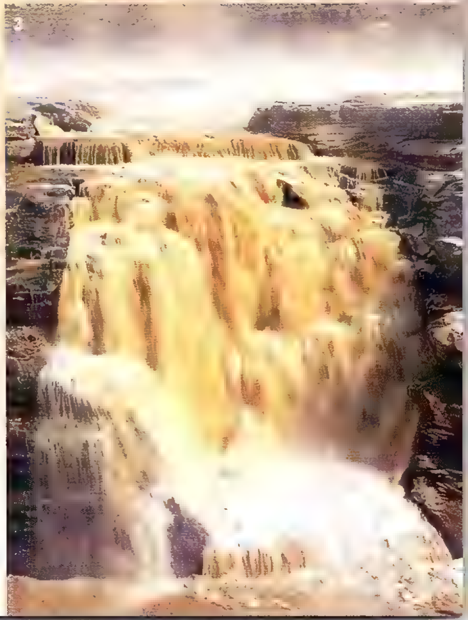
Mausoleum of Yellow Emperor in Shaanxi

Transportation: Take a scheduled bus between Xi'an and Huangling in Shaanxi; or a scheduled bus between Xi'an and Yan'an, and get off at Huang Di Ling stop.

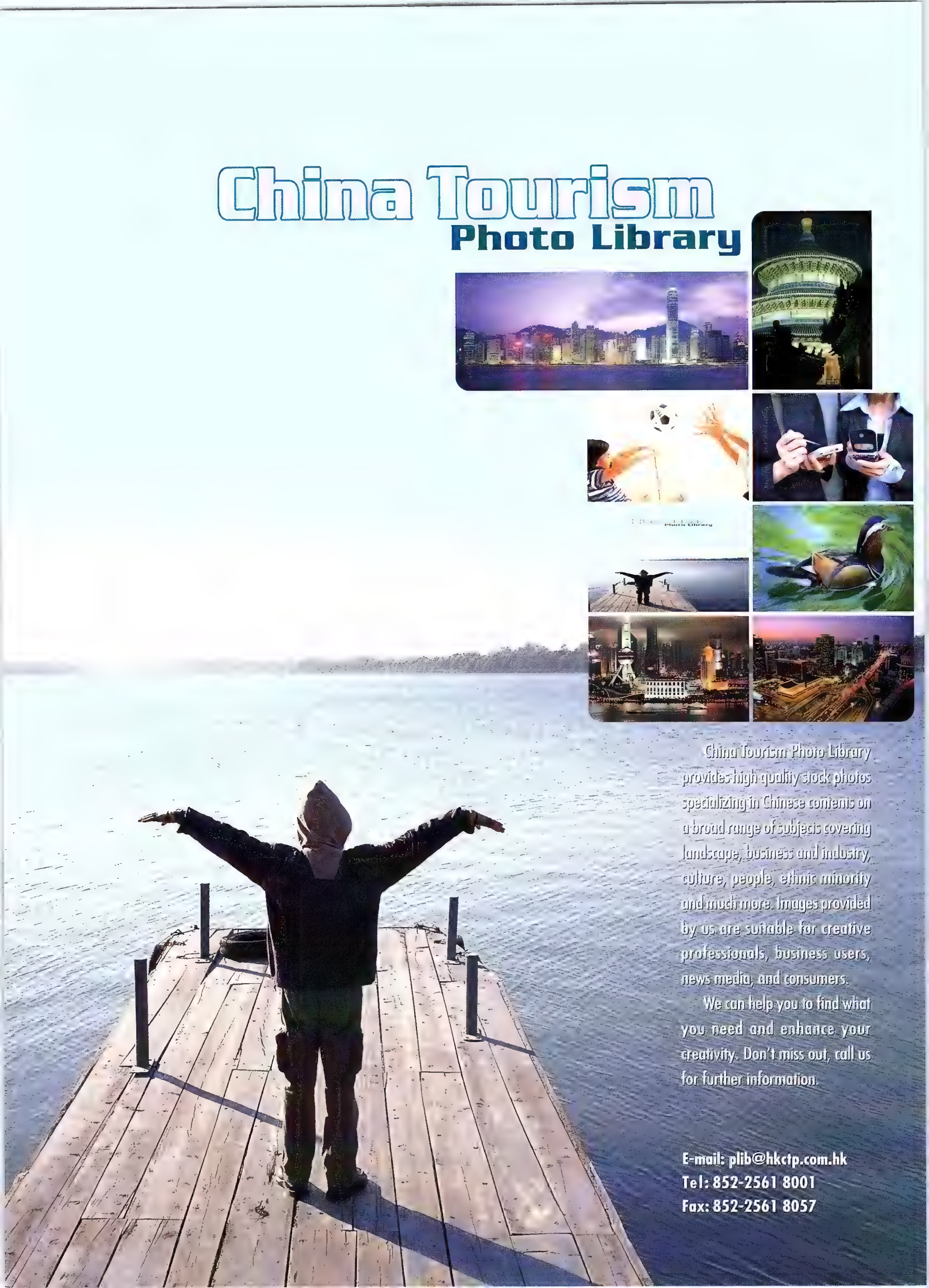
Address: Huangling County, to the south of Yan'an, Shaanxi Province. Admission: 20 yuan

1. Chinese like to claim themselves as being 'descendants of Yandi and Huangdi', the common ancestors of the Chinese. Statues of Yandi and Huangdi can be found in Zhengzhou, Henan Province . (by Ma Yiu Chun)

2. Statues of migrants fleeing from war to Zhuji Lane, Guangdong Province. (by Zhuang Chaoqing)



3. The Yellow River Delta is the cradle of Chinese civilization and the origin of most Chinese family names. (by Yuan Xuejun)



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Inner Mongolia 25 ~ 31 Jul

Nadam Fair

Nadam means 'entertainment or game' in Mongolian and Nadam Fair is the annual traditional pageant for Mongolians held in summer when the grass is green and the livestock stout and strong. Activities like singing, dancing, wrestling, horseracing, and archery are the primary role of the fair. Besides, track and field sports, tug-of-war, basketball and volleyball matches are relatively new additions making the fair even more interesting.

Tibet 10 Aug

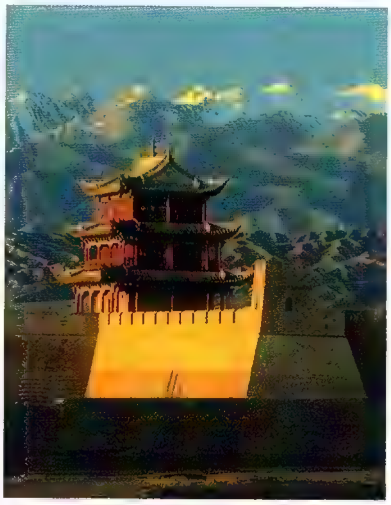
Changtang Chachen Horse Race Festival

As the most important festival in north Tibet during the golden season on the grassland, thousand of herdsmen throng to Nagqu riding fine horses, and carrying the local products. They form as city of tens south of Nagqu town. There will be thrilling horse race, archery and demonstrations of horsemanship. Songs and dance troupes from all part of Tibet will add to the fun.

Shandong 11 ~ 26 Aug

Qingdao Int'l Beer Festival 2007

Bottom up, man! Held around Huiquan Square (Olympic Time Square), please be ready for the Qingdao International Beer Festival – an annual event combining beer culture, entertainment, sports and trade. Represented in the festival are over 30 types of world-known beers, such as the Budweiser, Carlsberg, Wernesgruener, etc., allowing the visitors to sample pure famous beers.



2007
JUL/AUG

Hong Kong 1 Jul

10th Anniversary of HKSAR

As there are a total of 460 events to celebrate running through January to December, the big day itself promises to be a mix of a ceremonial and celebratory events, including a flag-raising ceremony, a parade, carnivals and, of course, a spectacular fireworks display to light up the night sky in a blaze of colour. Don't miss the precious moments of HKSAR!

To view more celebration programmes, visit the website:

www.gov.hk/en/theme/10/events

Gansu Jul

Jiayuguan Pass International Glider Festival

Jiayuguan Pass Glider Base is regarded as one of the three best glider bases along side ones in Australia and South Africa. During the festival, besides various gliding competitions and acrobatic flight performances, other activities such as an evening bonfire party, local snacks and cultural relic exhibitions are also presented to the tourists. Visitors can fly under the guidance of pilots feeling the stimulation of flight and at the same time admiring panoramic views of the mythical desert and snow covered mountains.

Xinjiang Jul ~ Aug

Xinjiang Grape Festival

It's almost 20 years since the first Xinjiang Grape Festival held in Turpan to commemorate the opening of the Silk Road some 2,100 years prior. Not just picking delicious grapes, visitors can also immerse themselves in the appreciation of the large firework display, acrobatic stunt performance, local dances, as well as painting and calligraphy exhibition.

Shanxi Jul ~ Aug

Mt Wutai Int'l Tourist Month

As one of four famous Buddhist Mountains in China, Mt Wutai offers elegant sceneries that attract numerous visitors from different countries. Every July when its International Tourist Month is celebrated, monks and honoured guests gather on this sacred mountain to hold the grand Buddhist ceremony. There are also folk entertainment activities and a Mule and Horse Fair.

READERSHIP SURVEY

China
TOURISM
HKSAR
10

Our readers' ideas and opinions are important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine. Thank you!

1. What did you enjoy about this issue (E310) and why?

____

____

2. Was there anything about this issue that you thought could be improved?

____

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3. Where did you first encounter *China Tourism*?

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☐ Hotel (Name of hotel:____________) ☐ Airline VIP lounge (Name of airline:______________________)

4. Why do you read *China Tourism*?

☐ Planning trips ☐ Business ☐ General Interest ☐ Others:______________________

5. How long have you been reading *China Tourism*?

☐ Since the beginning ☐ Less than 3 years ☐ 3 ~ 5 years ☐ 6 ~ 9 years ☐ More than 10 years

6. Which *China Tourism* articles are you most interested in reading?

☐ Book Review ☐ Challenges ☐ City Snaps ☐ Culture ☐ Customs
☐ Discovery ☐ Editorial ☐ Excursions ☐ Feature Story ☐ HK Mosaic
☐ Hotel Picks ☐ Landscapes ☐ Nature ☐ New Attractions ☐ On the Way
☐ Profile ☐ Traveller's Corner ☐ Others: ______________________

7. What information or topics you would like *China Tourism* to cover in the future?

____

8. What are your suggestions for improving the magazine?

____

9. How many times have you visited China?

☐ Less than 3 times ☐ 3 ~ 5 times ☐ More than 5 times

10. What is your favourite destination in China? ______________________

11. What other travel- or China-related publications do you read?

☐ Traveller (National Geographic) ☐ China Today ☐ China Pictorial ☐ Action Asia
☐ Hong Kong Discovery ☐ HK Magazine ☐ Culture Hong Kong ☐ Others:____________

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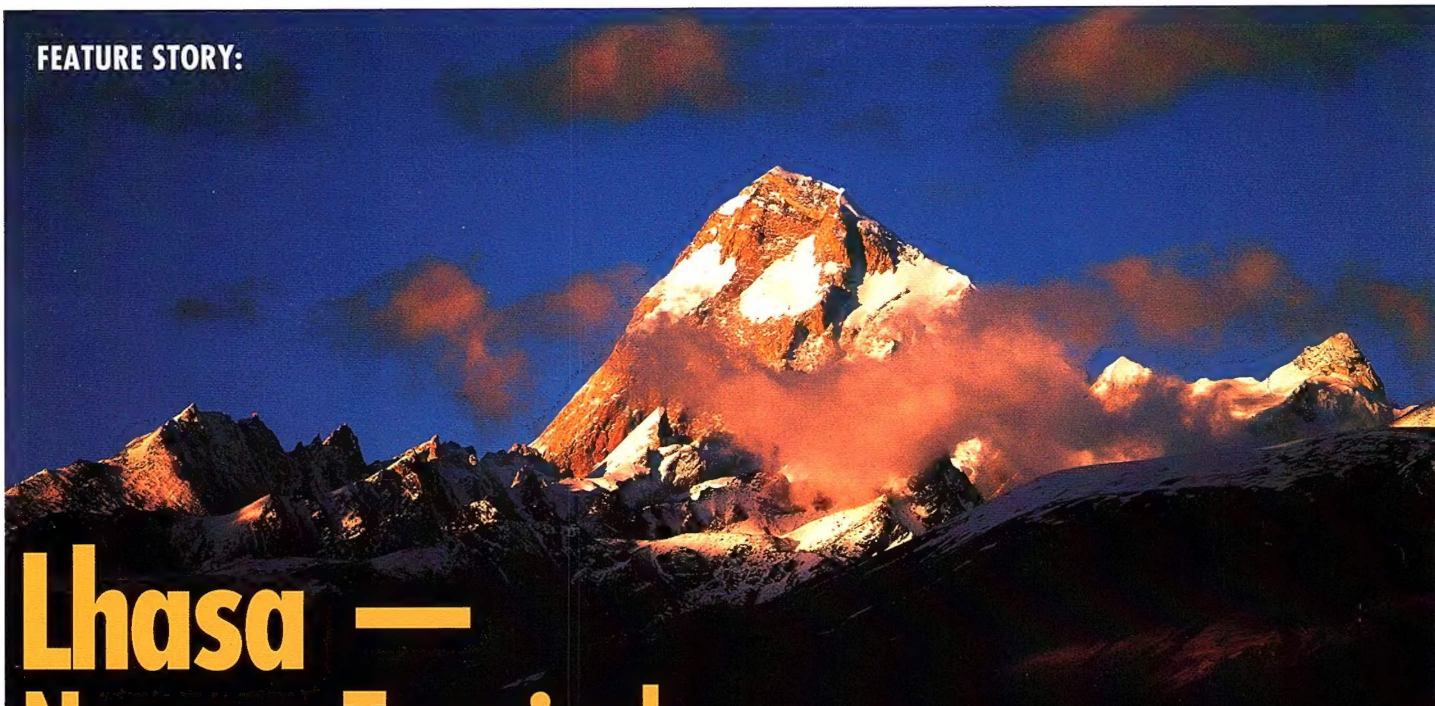


FEATURE STORY:

Lhasa — Never a Terminal

The first of July this year did not only mean the first anniversary of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, but also marked the beginning of constructing the QTR extension – the Lhasa-Xigazê section. Under the plan, the rail will eventually connect Xigazê to the reopened Yadong Port of China's neighbouring country Sikkim. Having been closed since 1962, the Yadong Port was an important trade port between China and South Asia. The rail will cross the Himilayan mountain ranges, linking China and India – two ancient civilized nations. Our reporter has explored this new route and shares with you the beautiful and cultural landscapes on the way.

Discoveries

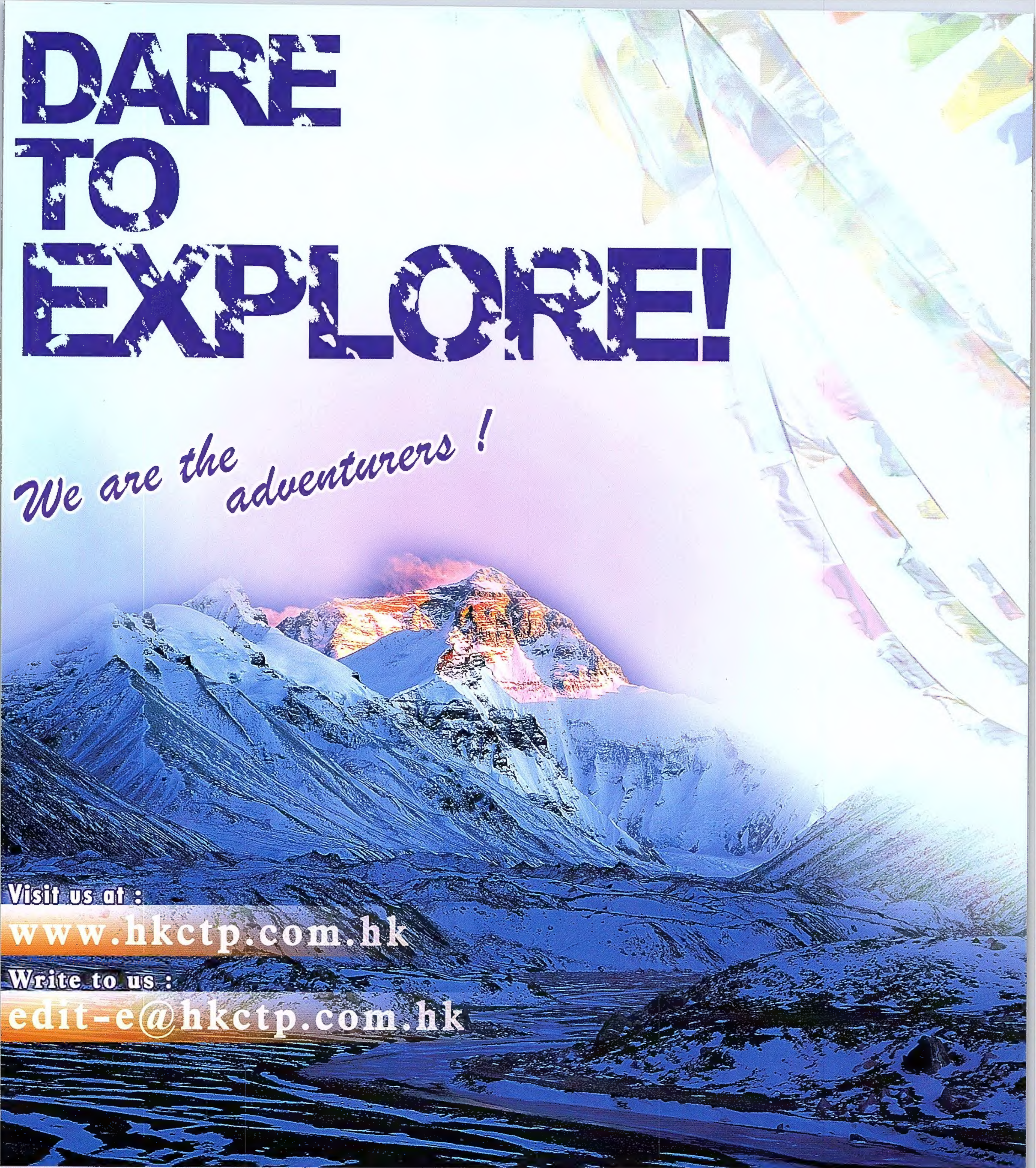
Langma — Tibetan Tap Dance

Langma in Tibetan language may precisely mean 'music and dance of the royal court', or 'classical music and dance'. The dance was once popular in Lhasa, Xigazê and Gangtzê in the past. In order to know more about the dance and its lesser-known history, the writer has acquainted with a group of modern Langma dancers and penetrated into their daily lives, being moved by their professionalism.

Nature

Golden Snub-nosed Monkey

Also known as Sichuan golden snub-nosed monkey, the golden snub-nosed monkey enjoys an important and respective status as the Giant Panda in China. It is also under first-grade protection of the state. Habitating in forests standing on 2,000-more metre above sea level, the animal is commonly found in secluded highland areas of West or North China's Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces. Our reporters have faced with challenges of the Mother Nature before recording the true life of the monkey.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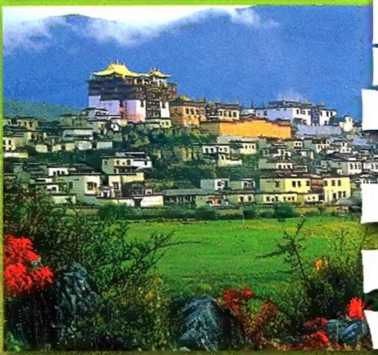

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